

WYCLIFFE COLLEGE LIBRARY



3 1761 02867 7706

*...paths of Bible Knowledge*

II.

# SYRIAN LIFE AND HISTORY



*WITH AN INTRODUCTION  
BY REGINALD STUART POOLE.*



LIBRARY

Wycliffe College

TORONTO

*Wycliffe*  
Shelf No. **BS 473. B99**

Register No. **3080**











ASSURBANI-PAL AND HIS QUEEN.







By-Paths of Bible Knowledge.

II.

# ASSYRIAN LIFE AND HISTORY

BY

M. E. HARKNESS.

WITH INTRODUCTION

BY R. STUART POOLE

BRITISH MUSEUM.



LONDON:  
THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,  
56, PATERNOSTER ROW, 65, ST. PAUL'S CHURCHYARD,  
AND 164, PICCADILLY.



# CONTENTS.



## CHAPTER I.

### ORIGIN OF THE ANCIENT ASSYRIANS.

Position and extent of Assyria.—Rise and fall of the Assyrian Kingdom.—Discovery of the sites of some famous Assyrian towns ... .. 11

## CHAPTER II.

### HISTORY OF THE PRINCIPAL KINGS.

Assur-nazir-pal, Shalmaneser II., Tiglath-Pileser II., Shalmaneser IV., Sargon, Sennacherib, Esarhaddon, Assur-bani-pal ... .. 14

## CHAPTER III.

### WRITING.

The four different forms : Hieroglyphic, Archaic, Babylonian, Ninevite.—Hieroglyphics... .. 36

## CHAPTER IV.

### LITERATURE.

The great library of Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh.—Mythological documents.—Religious records.—Poetical compositions.—Historical and other works ... .. 50

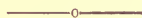
## CHAPTER V.

### RELIGION.

Assur, the supreme Assyrian god.—Pantheon.—Genii.—Burnt-offerings.—Religious services.—Immortality of the soul.—Heaven.—Hell ... .. 67



## ILLUSTRATIONS.

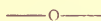


	PAGE
Assurbani-pal and his Queen—Frontispiece.	
Monolith of Shalmaneser II.      ...      ...      ...      ...	20
Fragment now in the British Museum showing Primitive Hieroglyphics and Cuneiform Characters side by side...	42
Part of an Assyrian Cylinder containing Hezekiah's Name	45
An Assyrian Book...      ...      ...      ...      ...	64
The Feroher      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...	68
Nergal      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...	73
Assyrian Bas-Relief...      ...      ...      ...      ...	86
Siege of a City      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...      ...	95





## INTRODUCTION.



THE results of research in the Assyrian documents may be described as a new commentary on the Old Testament. To use this valuable aid to Biblical study aright, we must understand its language and style, and still more the thought that underlies the expression. In other words, we must not take out fragments here and there, and use them as notes in our Bibles, but we must examine the whole body of documents, and acquaint ourselves with their writers. We must learn something definite as to the Assyrian race, with its language, religion, art, and manners, and read its connected history. Thus, and thus only, can we use its writings with advantage.

To give this necessary information—not as yet attempted in English in a complete form—is the purpose of the present volume, which is the more intelligible, as being directly connected with the greatest Assyrian collection in the world, that of the British Museum. It is therefore at once a summary of Assyriology, and a description of the Assyrian galleries of the National Collection.

In a study constantly advancing, it is necessary to cite only the latest authorities, or to correct by them any earlier statements. This has been carefully done, and the general accuracy of the work may be trusted. It must, however, be understood that the best writers differ on many minor points, such as the spelling of Assyrian names, which must not mislead the student with the idea that they disagree on essentials. The advance of knowledge will render some modification and much addition necessary in later editions, each one of which will be brought down to date.

The usefulness of the work will be due not merely to its accuracy and clearness, but also to certain peculiar features, which it will be well here to state. It excludes all side views and inferences, which render the most popular works on sections of the subject unintelligible to the ordinary reader for whom they are intended. He should not be supposed to be a master of comparative philology, and the complex history of the ancient East. Farther, it treats the subject independently of the Bible, with that completeness which enables the student to find for himself the value of the Assyrian texts, and to make his own use of their manifold contents.

To put the two records, the Biblical and Assyrian, side by side, is a labour not here attempted, as it could not

be worthily done within the limits of the work. The student should, however, carefully note the historical references to Assyria in the Bible, from the tenth chapter of Genesis downwards, and he will find the sacred story will gain a more vivid reality, while many of its difficult parts will be illustrated. Thus, the wars of Shalmaneser III. with Syria show the hidden springs of the policy of Ahab, Jehoshaphat, and Benhadad. He will do well to study, with such excellent aid as the Queen's Printers' Variorum Bible affords, the various references to Assyria in the Prophets; Isaiah's prediction of her fall at the time of her greatest strength; the special prophecy of Nahum against Nineveh; Ezekiel's noble retrospect, where he warns Pharaoh by the fate of his rival, as Nahum warns Nineveh by the overthrow of Thebes (No Amon). Of all these places, the most striking is where Isaiah describes the triumphant march of Sennacherib against Jerusalem, and the dismay of the fleeing population, as town after town, village after village, is swept away by the torrent of war, and at this moment predicts the catastrophe of the invader's army (Isaiah x. 24-34).

The prophecies were uttered in the days of the power of Assyria. No one can compare Nahum and Ezekiel without feeling what a political gulf lies between their

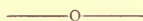
times. So swift and sudden was the fall of Assyria, that she passed at once into history in a generation, and could be written of as we write of the kingdoms whose disappearance we have witnessed. This disappearance is the essence of the predictions, which have no qualification but in one passage of future hope (Is. xix. 23-25), a hope for spiritual, not political, life; and thus while other nations and cities of the days of the Bible yet remain, Assyria and Nineveh have vanished, though the race of the old lords of the East yet lingers in the poverty-stricken and oppressed peasantry of the north of Mesopotamia.

REGINALD STUART POOLE.





## ASSYRIAN LIFE AND HISTORY.



## CHAPTER I.

## ORIGIN OF THE ASSYRIANS.

THE origin of the Assyrians has not yet been discovered, but their religion, literature, method of writing, and science, being all of Babylonian nature, we are led to believe that the first home of the Assyrian nation was in Chaldea. This supposition is confirmed by the statement made in the tenth chapter of Genesis, namely, that the Assyrians were of Shemitic stock, and that they went out of Chaldea to found a kingdom, of which the chief cities were Nineveh, Calah, and others.<sup>1</sup> (Genesis, x. 11, 12.)

The original Assyria, so far as we know, was a small and compact territory occupying the middle part of the basin of the Tigris, between latitudes 35° and 39°, a space about one hundred miles from north to south, and seventy miles from east to west.

<sup>1</sup> The reading of the margin, which assigns the foundation of the Assyrian cities to Nimrod, the Cushite, is probably preferable; it would equally assign the source of Assyrian civilization to Chaldea.

As time went on, the extent of the country increased ; and in 650 B.C. Assyria Proper reached its greatest limit, and stretched from latitude  $35^{\circ}$  to  $38^{\circ}$ , and longitude  $40^{\circ}$  to  $45^{\circ}$ . At this period of its supreme power, Assyria ruled over a large extent of Central Asia ; and the districts subject to its dominion included Syria, Cyprus, Egypt, and Asia Minor as far as Lydia, on the west ; Elam, and part of Media, on the east ; and Babylonia, and part of Arabia, on the south.

Between the period when Assyria was first founded by a colony from Chaldea, and the period when it reached its greatest fame, the extent of territory acknowledging its rule varied considerably. Sometimes a warlike monarch ascended the throne, and then conquests were made in every direction. Sometimes a series of weak kings occupied the seat of government, and then the vanquished nations asserted their independence and threw off the yoke of Assyria. Owing to these constant changes, it is impossible to define the limits of the Assyrian empire at every point of its history, and we are forced to content ourselves with indicating the minimum and maximum of Assyrian dominion.

In the seventh century before Christ, Assyria sank into decay, and remained unknown to history until about forty years ago. Then the sites of some of its most famous cities were discovered ; namely, Kalah-Shergat, supposed to represent Assur, Nimroud, the Calah of Scripture, and Kouyunjik, still indicated by local tradition as the site of Nineveh.

Great mounds, formed by the natural accumulation of the soil over the *débris* of ruined edifices, indicated the existence of these buried cities, and led to the excavations which have furnished us with so much valuable information concerning ancient Assyria. There, hidden from view under masses of crumbled ruins, were found monuments engraved with annals of Assyrian fame and power, and sculptures which portray the gods whom the Assyrians worshipped, and the conquests which their kings achieved.

The language in which this stone and brick literature is written is difficult to decipher for two reasons: the intricacy of the characters, and the fact that a knowledge of cognate languages is indispensable for the true translation of the words. Great scholars have, however, been found willing to undertake the task of decipherment, and by patient perseverance they have accomplished the work. The result of their labours is given briefly in this book, the pages of which are intended to form a popular guide to Assyrian history, and an introduction to the study of Assyriology.



## CHAPTER II.

## HISTORY OF THE PRINCIPAL ASSYRIAN KINGS.

ASSYRIAN records give the names of kings who reigned as far back as 1820 B.C., but the earliest sovereign of whom any large monuments have been discovered is Assur-nazir-pal. This monarch began to reign over Assyria about 885 B.C., and died 860 B.C. His name, Assur-nazir-pal, signifies "Assur preserves the son;" and in truth he regarded himself as the child of the great god, and lost no opportunity of acknowledging his celestial father, and of vaunting Assur's glory and power. He was very proud also of his own birth and position, as we learn from an inscription discovered among the ruins of a temple at Nimroud. In this he describes himself as "the mighty king, the king of multitudes, a prince unequalled, powerful over hosts of men, a prince reducing to order his disobedient ones, a strong worker, a chief unwavering." "I am a king," he says; "I am lord, I am exalted, I am great, I am honourable, I am glorious Assur-nazir-pal, the mighty King of Assyria."

We possess very full historical records of this king, and among these the inscription already mentioned is the most important. In it Assur-nazir-pal tells us that

he reigned over a territory extending from "the Tigris to Mount Lebanon;" that he brought "the Great Sea and all countries from the sun-rise to the sun-set" under his sway; that his campaigns took place in the mountains of Armenia, in Commagene, in the country towards Pontus, and in Western Persia; that in one expedition he vanquished the King of Babylon; in another he reduced to subjection the southern part of Syria; and in another he advanced to the mountain chains of the Amanus and Lebanon. Thus we see that his campaigns were directed against the mountain tribes on the north-west, the inhabitants of the countries on the north-east, and the Babylonians on the south; and that he laboured to subjugate Northern Syria, and to force into submission the inhabitants of the great marts of Phœnicia.

Finally, the inscription gives a very interesting account of his restoration of the city of Calah. "That city," he says, "was decayed and reduced to a heap of ruins; that city I built anew; the people captured by my hand, of the countries which I had subdued, Zukhi and Lakie throughout their entirety, the town of Sirku, on the other side of the Euphrates, the subjects of Liburna, I collected within, I made them occupy. A water-course from the Upper Zab I dug; timber upon its shores I erected; a choice of animals to Assur my lord, and for the chiefs of my realm, I sacrificed; the ancient mound I threw down: to the level of the water I brought it; one hundred and twenty courses on the low level I caused it to go; its walls I built; and I completed it."



Assur-nazir-pal was succeeded on the throne by his son Shalmaneser II., a man of war, whose long and prosperous reign lasted from 860 B.C. to 825 B.C. An account of the last nine years of Shalmaneser's rule, and the annals of his earliest campaigns, are given in an inscription on the Balawat Gates in the British Museum. These gates were discovered in 1878, at Balawat, a place nine miles distant from Nimroud. They formed, originally, the entrance to the court-yard of a palace or temple, being two enormous rectangular folding doors, twenty-two feet high, and twenty-six feet broad. Only the decorations of these doors have been brought to England, namely, the bronze plates which were anciently fastened across their frames by nails of the same metal. Each plate is about eight feet in length, and contains two bands of embossed reliefs, showing the battles, triumphs, cruelties, and devotions of Shalmaneser from 857 B.C. to 849 B.C. The representations of men and animals upon the plates are for the most part remarkably well done, and stand in natural attitudes; and the draped figures are fairly graceful. All the figures appear in profile, as is usual in Assyrian art, full-faced forms being too difficult to execute. The pictures were made by the process of beating out, technically called embossed or *repoussé* work; the outline and detail were chased afterwards with a graver or other cutting tool. Most of the scenes are accompanied by short inscriptions, which explain the events depicted; but the words are evidently intended for ornament rather than service, and are so carelessly

cut that they are difficult to decipher. All the same, the inscriptions are valuable, and throw light upon the geography and identification of ancient cities, and manifest the feelings of the Assyrians towards Babylonia, that country from whence their ancestors came forth a small and insignificant people; and which had a romance in their eyes, owing to the fact that it contained the sites of the exploits of those gods and heroes who Assyrians and Babylonians alike worshipped. The inscriptions describe the mighty conquests which Shalmaneser accomplished from the highlands of the Tigris and the Euphrates to Phœnicia; and note especially the subjection of the Hittites, and the tribute levied from divers vassal princes.<sup>1</sup>

The expedition to Chaldea, and the defeat of the Babylonian army, led by a rebel brother of the native king, thus forced to call in the Assyrians, are dwelt upon with great exultation; and the triumphant entry into Babylon—a city described as “the foundation of heaven and earth, and the seat of life”—is spoken of as a solemn occasion upon which sacrifices were made to all the deities whom the king worshipped.

We learn more of the history of Shalmaneser from a monolith discovered at Kurkh, a place lying on the right bank of the Tigris, about twenty miles distant from

<sup>1</sup> It appears, however, from the reliefs that the Hittite King of Carchemish and the Assyrian monarch exchanged presents; thus the transactions would seem to have been a treaty, not the submission vaunted in the inscription.

Diabekr. This tablet, which now stands in the Nimroud central saloon of the British Museum, near the Balawat Gates, contains mention of Ahab, King of Israel, and Benhadad II. (or Benhader II.), King of Syria, and tells of a great battle fought by these kings against the Assyrians. We learn from it that the nations of Syria and Palestine were alarmed by the progress of Shalmaneser, and they determined to combine together to throw him back upon the Euphrates. They perceived that isolated action against such a mighty warrior must result in their complete overthrow, therefore Benhadad II. joined with Ahab, and ten other kings, to give battle to the enemy. The confederate armies met those of Shalmaneser at Karkar, a city whose site is unknown, but which without doubt stood in Northern Syria. The forces on either side were equal in number, both mustering some 45,000 men ; but Shalmaneser's army was superior in organisation to the motley host of the enemy, which comprised within its ranks Hamathites, Phœnicians, Arabs and Egyptians, as well as Syrians and Israelites. A battle was fought, and, according to the monolith inscription, the victory rested with Shalmaneser, who boasts, "from the city of Gilza'u a destruction of them I made ; 14,000 men of their troops with weapons I slew. Like the air-god over them a deluge I poured, and with their flight the surface of the waters I filled. All their hosts with weapons I laid low, and with their corpses the area of the district I filled."

It is probable, however, that the battle was a drawn





MONOLITH OF SHALMANESER II.



one, for we read that when it was over, Shalmaneser withdrew his army from the country, and made no further attempt to cross the Euphrates for the space of five years. Moreover, we know that it was the habit of the Assyrian monarchs to claim victories for themselves on all occasions, unless they were totally overthrown; and defeats remain unrecorded, and can only be guessed at by the number of gaps left in the annals of victories and successful campaigns.

During his long reign of thirty-five years, Shalmaneser came in contact with several kings mentioned in the Scriptures, and of these we find records on the table of victory which he set up at Calah, namely, "the Black Obelisk." This monument was discovered under the *débris* of Shalmaneser's palace at Nimroud. It is about seven feet high, and two feet broad at the base, tapering gently towards the summit, which is crowned with three low steps or gradines. The four sides are sculptured, in part with bas-reliefs, and in part with cuneiform writing, and the whole is of black marble. The bas-reliefs represent King Shalmaneser, accompanied by his tartan and other great officers, receiving the tribute of five nations whose envoys are shown into the royal presence by court officials. The messengers prostrate themselves at the great king's feet ere they present their offerings; and among them we see the tribute-bearers of Jehu, King of Israel, and possibly the representation of Jehu himself. The Israelitish ambassadors carry in their hands, or on their shoulders, gifts of gold and

silver in bullion, and manufactured articles ; the other envoys present various wild animals, and precious things, among which bars of metal, elephants' tusks, and shawls or tissues are conspicuous.

The order in which the envoys are represented is as follows :—First, those of Guzan, a Median country ; second, the Israelites ; third, the Muzri from Muzr, a country towards Armenia ; fourth, the Sukians, from the Southern Euphrates ; fifth, the Patinians from the Hittite country on the Orontes. Above the bas-reliefs, and in a long series below, are two hundred and forty lines of inscription. Some of these are explanatory of the pictures, while the long inscription gives an account of various victories gained by Shalmaneser, and of the tribute brought to him by princes who acknowledged his rule. The record extends over thirty-one years, beginning about the reign of Ahab, and ending during that of Jehu.

The date when Jehu paid tribute as a vassal prince is not given on the obelisk ; but knowing as we do that the monument was set up towards the close of Shalmaneser's long life, and about the middle of Jehu's reign, we may safely place the period of the embassy between the wars of Hazael, King of Syria, in Israel and in Judah. We find no mention of a contest with Jehu among the battles which occupy the inscribed portion of the monument, and thus it would appear that the King of Israel became a tributary of his own free-will, and in order to strengthen himself against his enemy King Hazael by the powerful support of the Assyrian monarch.

Hazael is also spoken of in the inscription. We are told that Shalmaneser in the eighteenth year of his reign crossed the Euphrates, and gave war to the Syrians. "Hazael, King of Damascus," he tells us, "to battle came : 1,221 of his chariots and 470 of his war-carriages with his camp I took from him." Thus are the glories of the Assyrian arms vaunted in proud words which fall on our ears with a ring unlike the language of the present period ; and the overthrow of hill tribes and small kingdoms are spoken of as great victories and mighty conquests, for the sense of proportion was totally lacking to the ancient Assyrians.

The battle of Karkar, which is noticed in the monolith inscription, is also mentioned in this record, but with a difference, the number of the enemy slain being stated at 20,500 instead of 14,000. We must not be surprised, however, to find this contradiction, for although the Assyrian documents are as a rule trustworthy, they contain many such inaccuracies, and cannot be judged by the modern standard of historical truth.

The immediate successors of Shalmaneser trod in his footsteps, and the annals of their reigns contain little but records of their battles and conquests. We meet with no king of importance until we come to the year 745 B.C., in which Tiglath-Pileser II. ascended the throne, a man who possessed all the martial tastes of his earlier predecessors, and an insatiable love of conquest.

Not content with the submission of the King of Babylon, he determined to march westward, and extend

his empire to the Egyptian border. To accomplish this object he was forced to subjugate all the States which opposed his progress, and to conquer the nations of Syria and Palestine. Fragments of history concerning this enterprise have come down to us on a tablet executed at that time, namely, the slab of Tiglath-Pileser II. The bas-reliefs on this tablet represent the Assyrian monarch in his chariot; and above, and to the left, are parts of battle scenes. The inscription which accompanies the reliefs is sadly mutilated, but nevertheless sufficient remains to tell us that the warlike Azariah (or Uzziah), King of Judah, formed a confederacy with the King of Hamath to arrest the progress of Assyria. The allies were defeated; and the country of Hamath was put under Assyrian administration. The inhabitants were carried away captives, men of one vanquished nation, and women of another, being transported to their vacant cities, in order to check all spirit of nationality. The Syrian king and eighteen of the neighbouring kings submitted; and Rezin of Syria, Menahem of Samaria, and Hiram of Tyre, are mentioned as paying tribute.

The Bible tells us that not long after this, Ahaz, King of Judah, who was harassed by the allied armies of the kings of Israel and Syria, sent the following message to Tiglath-Pileser: "I am thy servant and thy son: come up and save me out of the hand of the King of Syria, and out of the hand of the King of Israel, which rise up against me." (2 Kings xvi. 7.) So Tiglath-Pileser went to help Ahaz against Pekah, King of Israel and Rezin

King of Syria ; and the result was the destruction of Damascus, and the deportation of the northern tribes of Israel, and of those beyond Jordan.

Tiglath-Pileser was succeeded by Shalmaneser IV., probably his son. This king led an expedition into Syria, and besieged Samaria. Making war upon the Phœnicians, who tried to shake off his yoke, he overran their whole country, forcing all their cities to resume a position of dependence. The island-city of Tyre, however, rebelled shortly after, and defeated the Assyrian arms ; and the resistance of the Syrians did not terminate until the reign of Sargon, a monarch who ascended the throne in the year 722 B.C.

Sargon was an usurper, who boldly proclaimed himself king on the death of the childless sovereign. He was one of the great state officers, and seems to have had no claim to the throne whatsoever, except his valour and the military services which he had previously rendered to the empire. He continued the Syrian war, and the city of Samaria was stormed after a siege of three years, and the whole country of Israel was subdued. The Israelites were carried into captivity, 27,200 of the people being transported from the city of Samaria alone. The kingdom of Israel was put an end to, and the Israelites were placed under a vassal king. (2 Kings xvii. 6 ; and xviii. 11.) This was the great Captivity of the Ten Tribes of Israel, by which all the leading men of the population were carried away.

Sargon made war on the kings of Chaldea and Elam,

and took Babylonian captives to Palestine. He annexed Karchemish, the chief city of Pisiri, a great centre of trade, and remarkable for its riches ; and attacked and stormed Muzazir, the capital of Ararat, and bore away Haldi, the god of the land. Besides these exploits, he fought many battles against the surrounding nations, and made constant expeditions into Palestine. He died in 705 B.C., and was succeeded by his son Sennacherib.

The name Sennacherib consists of three elements, and means "Sin (*i.e.*, the moon-god) has increased or multiplied brothers ;" and this leads us to suppose that previous to his birth his father Sargon had only possessed daughters, and no heir to his dominions. Sennacherib reigned from 704 B.C. to 681 B.C. ; and during this period he made his name famous by the battles he fought, and by his great victories.

His first war was against Merodach Baladan, King of Babylon, whom he attacked at a place about ten miles distant from Babylon, and defeated. "Merodach Baladan," he tells us, "entered into the swamps, and his life saved." After which, he says, "into Merodach Baladan's palace which is in Babylon I joyfully entered, and his treasure-house I opened, and great treasure as spoil I counted. My soldiers to the midst of the lakes and swamps I sent, and five days they searched, but the place of Merodach Baladan was not seen ; so Bel-êpus, who as a little child had grown up within my palace, I raised to the throne." It appears, however, that the rule of Bel-êpus was not successful ; for a few years later

Sennacherib made another expedition into Babylon, and appointed his own son to the government of the country. The third great expedition of his reign was into Palestine, where his operations were first directed against Luliya, King of Zidon (the Elulæus of Josephus). Sennacherib tells us that Luliya fled from Tyre to Cyprus; and he speaks also of the submission of various Phœnician cities, and of an audience in which he received tribute from most of the kings of Palestine. Marching through Phœnicia, he arrived at Askelon, and then passed on to Ekron, and gave battle to the allied armies of the Ethiopians and Egyptians at Eltekeh, a place about six miles from Lachish. The allies were defeated, and Ekron submitted. After which Sennacherib says, "The priests and princes who the rebellion had made, with the sword I slew, and in heaps over the whole city I threw down their corpses. The sons of the city doing this into slavery I gave; the rest who had not rebelled, and who of their sections were not, their innocence I proclaimed."

Sennacherib now marched towards Judah, and on his way he captured forty-six fortified cities, also fortresses and small cities with, as he says, "the marching of a host, and surrounding of a multitude; by attack of ranks, force of battering rams, and missiles. Thus 200,150 people, small and great, male and female, horses, mules, asses, camels, oxen, and sheep, as spoil I counted." He besieged and took Lachish, and then prepared to advance upon Jerusalem.

Hezekiah, who, according to the words of Sennacherib, "was now like a caged bird within his city," sent in his submission to the Assyrian king at Lachish, and said, "I have offended ; return from me : that which thou puttest on me will I bear." (2 Kings xviii. 14.) So Sennacherib ordered him to pay three hundred talents of silver and thirty talents of gold ; and as the royal treasury did not suffice for all this tribute, the gold had to be cut off from the doors and the pillars "of the temple of the Lord." (2 Kings xviii. 16.) The Assyrian inscriptions are silent concerning the less propitious part of this expedition ; but the Bible tells us that while Hezekiah submitted, and paid tribute, his allies in Egypt, led by Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia, recovered strength, and prepared to come to his assistance. Sennacherib, hearing of the advance of the allies, thought that Hezekiah was merely treating with him in order to gain time. Consequently he sent three of his principal officers with a threat to Jerusalem, and they arrived at the gate of the city, and called loudly for the king. Some of the inhabitants of the town came out on the wall, and then the Rabshakeh, the head of the embassy, said, "Thus saith the great King, the King of Assyria, What confidence is this wherein thou trustest ? Now, behold, thou trustest upon the staff of this bruised reed, even upon Egypt, on which if a man lean, it will go into his hand, and pierce it : so is Pharaoh King of Egypt unto all that trust on him." And raising his voice, the Rabshakeh cried aloud, so that all the people on the wall might hear : "Hear the word of



the great King of Assyria: Thus saith the king, Let not Hezekiah deceive you: for he shall not be able to deliver you out of his hand: neither let Hezekiah make you trust in the Lord, saying, The Lord will surely deliver us, and this city shall not be delivered into the hand of the King of Assyria. Hath any of the gods of the nations delivered at all his land out of the hand of the King of Assyria? Where are the gods of Hamath, and of Arpad? where are the gods of Sepharvaim, Hena, and Ivah? have they delivered Samaria out of mine hand? Who are they among all the gods of the countries, that have delivered their country out of mine hand, that the Lord should deliver Jerusalem out of mine hand? Harken not to Hezekiah: for thus saith the King of Assyria, Make an agreement with me by a present, and come out to me, and then eat ye every man of his own vine, and every one of his fig tree, and drink ye every one the waters of his cistern: until I come and take you away to a land like your own land, a land of corn and wine, a land of bread and vineyards, a land of oil olive and of honey, that ye may live, and not die: and hearken not unto Hezekiah, when he persuadeth you, saying, The Lord will deliver us." (2 Kings xviii.)

When Hezekiah heard the words of the Rabshakeh, he was troubled, and sent to ask counsel of the prophet Isaiah. The prophet advised him to offer resistance, and promised deliverance on the part of Israel's God. Encouraged by this, Hezekiah gave no answer to the

embassy ; and the Rabshakeh, unable to elicit a promise of submission, returned to his master's camp. He found Sennacherib warring against Libnah ; and when he related the failure of his errand, an angry message was again sent to Jerusalem. The threats of the Assyrian monarch, however, were never fulfilled, for "it came to pass that night, that the angel of the Lord went out and smote in the camp of the Assyrians an hundred fourscore and five thousand : and when they arose early in the morning, behold, they were all dead corpses. So Sennacherib King of Assyria departed, and went and returned, and dwelt at Nineveh." (2 Kings xix, 35, 36.)

The Egyptians preserved the tradition of this Divine deliverance, though in a corrupt form. Herodotus relates of the Egyptians that "the warrior caste in Egypt refused to fight for King Sethon, priest of Ptah, because he had deprived them of certain privileges : the priest, overwhelmed with trouble, entered into the temple of the god, and lamented there all the difficulties and dangers he was about to encounter. While he was praying, sleep overpowered him, and in a dream he saw the god standing by his side, and received a promise that he should not be overcome by the Assyrians. Filled with confidence by this vision, he assembled under his banner all the Egyptians willing to accompany him, and set out the next morning with an army composed of tradesmen and artisans. His forces arrived before those of the enemy, and lay down to sleep in sight of the Assyrian host. During the night a multitude of field-mice came upon

the adversary, and gnawed the strings of their bows and their leather armour to such an extent that when the Assyrian soldiers awoke in the morning they found all their armour destroyed. They were forced to flee away unprotected, and consequently great numbers of them were slain. To commemorate this event a statue of the Egyptian king was erected in the temple of Ptah, holding a mouse in his hand, and with this inscription, "May he who regards me become pious."<sup>1</sup>

The reign of Sennacherib terminated in a tragedy : for one day, while he was worshipping in the house of Nisroch his god, he was slain by his two sons, and Esarhaddon his son reigned in his stead. (2 Kings xix. 37.)

Esarhaddon ruled over the empire from 681 B.C. to 668 B.C. He was a milder king than his father, and though he made war he exhibited a much gentler nature. His name signifies "Assur gave a brother;" and he appears to have been a younger brother of Adrammelech and Sharezer, the men who murdered their sire in the temple of Nisroch. Esarhaddon's first war was directed against his unnatural brothers, whom he entirely defeated upon the banks of the Upper Euphrates ; the one was killed, and the other was forced to take refuge in Armenia.

<sup>1</sup> Such is the legend told by Herodotus. It is curious that he names a tributary Egyptian king instead of Tirhakah, King of Ethiopia. Canon Rawlinson explains the legend as having originated from a statue of the king holding a mouse in his hand, the mouse being in Egyptian hieroglyphics a symbol of destruction.

A revolt took place in Syria soon after his accession, but it was successfully subdued. Arabia and Egypt were conquered, and numerous other victories were achieved. Esarhaddon in all these undertakings was comparatively merciful, and the phrase "I showed mercy to him," occurs frequently in the inscriptions ; he also restored to his enemies their gods whom he had captured ; and gave a further proof of generosity by releasing Manasseh, King of Judah, whom he had carried captive to Babylon.

He was succeeded on the throne by his son, Assur-bani-pal, a king who reigned from 668 B.C. to 626 B.C. Assur-bani-pal was the literary king of Assyria, and he records of himself, "Nebo and Tasmit gave me broad cars, and my seeing eyes regarded the engraved characters of the tablets. The secrets of Nebo, the literature of the library, as much as is suitable, on tablets I wrote, I engraved, I explained, and for the instruction of my subjects in the midst of my palace I placed." He built a library at Kouyunjik, and stored in it thousands of inscribed tablets. He also restored the walls and ramparts of Nineveh, which had decayed since the time of Sennacherib, and rebuilt with great splendour the temple in Assur. At Babylon he adorned the temple of Bel, and presented a splendid couch and chariot to the deity ; and being devoted to the worship of Ishtar, he beautified her temples both at Nineveh and Arbela.

He was one of the kings known to the Greeks under the name of Sardanapalus, and they represented him as an effeminate monarch who adopted an extravagant

style of dress, and indulged freely in the luxuries of the table. A relief of his period, which has been excavated and brought to England, favours this idea of his character, for in it we see him reclining on a couch in the royal garden, and surrounded by musicians and fan-bearers. His queen is seated near him, and both partake of a banquet spread under the trees. Nevertheless he was a great hunter, and he had a park on the eastern side of Nineveh filled with various wild animals, in which he enjoyed the chase whenever he pleased. As a soldier he did little to distinguish himself, for he left the administration of military affairs in the hands of skilful generals, and if he accompanied the army, he went rather as a spectator than a commander. All the same he took the glory of every triumph to himself, and described as due to his bravery the conquest of Elam, the conquest of Babylon, and the retention under his rule of all his father's possessions, except Egypt, which he lost after a great struggle ; and he governed the empire with great pomp, and gratified the pride of his subjects by constant pageants and shows. His principal wars were against Egypt, Minni, Elam, and Arabia ; also against Tyre, Lydia, and Karbit. Sculptures in the British Museum represent his forces fighting against those of Teumman, King of Elam. These reliefs show the successive scenes of the battle : the rout of the Elamites ; the overturning of Teumman's chariot ; Teumman trying to escape by the aid of his son Parritu ; Parritu drawing a bow to defend his father ; and, finally, the Assyrians cutting off the

head of Teumman, and carrying it in a chariot to Assyria, in order to hang it triumphantly in the garden of their sovereign.

A mystery hangs over the death of Assur-bani-pal, and the inscriptions are silent concerning his end.

From this period, also, the history of Assyria itself is vague and uncertain, so far as the monuments which we now possess are concerned.

We learn from Greek and other sources that the energy of the king and the military power of the nation were alike broken by the dogged resistance of the Elamites, and the alliance of the Egyptians and Lydians. The fall of Nineveh was averted for a time by the Scythian invasion, when a barbarous race swept over Asia as far as the confines of Egypt. But at length Cyaxares, King of the Medes, overthrew the Scythians, and in alliance with Nebuchadnezzar of Babylon besieged and took Nineveh; and the last King of Assyria (who appears to have been the Assur-bel-ili of the inscriptions, called by the Greeks Sardanapalus, like Assur-bani-pal) set fire to his palace in a fit of despair, and perished in the flames.

So obscure is this period, owing to the want of native information, that we do not know whether the final catastrophe took place in 626 B.C. or 607 B.C.; but the latter date is more probable, because not long before that period, Josiah, King of Judah, fell at the battle of Megiddo, in an attempt to repel the Egyptian king, who was advancing against the King of Assyria.

The fall of the kingdom was so abrupt, and its cause is so little known, that we cannot help hoping that our ignorance on the subject may one day be enlightened by the discovery of inscriptions bearing on the period ; but at present we only know that about the year 600 B.C. the kingdom of Assyria fell, and fell never to arise again.



## CHAPTER III.

## ASSYRIAN WRITINGS.

THE Assyrian language was a dialect of Babylonia, and consequently a Semitic tongue allied to the group of Hebrew, Arabic, and Syriac, but nearest to Hebrew and Syriac. It was spoken by the Assyrians when they went out of Chaldea to found for themselves an independent kingdom on the banks of the Tigris, and it always retained the general construction and features of the mother speech, although, as the country advanced in civilization, its vocabulary became both enlarged and modified.

The writing of the Assyrians was also of Babylonian origin, and can be traced back to its primitive source, in spite of all the changes which further development and simplification wrought in the appearance of the characters used by the scribes.

Assyrian writing presents itself to students in four different forms, the Hieroglyphic, the Archaic, the Babylonian, and the Ninevite. The last form is found on the greater mass of Assyrian monuments from the eighteenth century B.C. to the fall of the monarchy in the seventh century B.C. ; and it is this kind of cuneiform



which has been taken as the type and pattern of all the rest, and published in printed books. By far the largest part of the inscriptions which we possess are written in it, and when we speak of Assyrian writing, we mean this form, because it was specially and generally used in Assyria itself. It is simpler than any of the other forms, being a simplification of the Babylonian, as the Babylonian was of the Archaic, and as the Archaic was of the Hieroglyphic. It is nevertheless very difficult, for the characters in which it is written are cumbrous and intricate, and represent a syllabary composed of some four or five hundred distinct forms. The whole of this syllabary must be committed to memory before the student can decipher the inscriptions; also some knowledge of Babylonian, Archaic, and Hieroglyphic forms must be acquired in order to arrive at the interpretation of the words; for, as previously stated, one form of writing was developed from another, and consequently all the forms were mixed one with another, and woven together in a seemingly inextricable way.

The Babylonian form, which was used in Chaldea at the time when the Assyrians left their first home, was a modification of the Archaic and Hieroglyphic forms. The two latter forms were almost the same, and can both be traced back to the Accadians, although probably the Accadians did not originate them. These Accadians are believed by some scholars to have been a Turanian people, who inhabited the plain of Babylonia and the neighbouring highlands before the advent of the Shemites.

The Accadians, when the Semitic invaders came among them, already possessed a method for giving permanent expression to their ideas. This is known from the inscriptions, and the same source teaches us that the new-comers were far behind the Accadians in civilization, and had but a spoken language, and no kind of writing at all. For some time the two races lived side by side, and gradually the Shemites learnt the importance of orthography, and began to adapt the Accadian characters to the expression of their own tongue, by using each Accadian sign representing a word to express a syllable in the Semitic language, though still retaining its meaning as an ideograph.

The difficulties and complications which this process brought about may be thus illustrated. Imagine the Normans at the time of the Conquest the possessors of a spoken language, but no form of written speech, and the English nation already possessed of both language and orthography. The Normans would soon perceive the value of a mode by which ideas could be transmitted and preserved, and would be anxious to acquire the power to write. Unable to originate a system of writing for themselves, they would seize the English written words and force them to represent the sounds of the Norman tongue; ignoring the fact that a language has a special word-formation of its own, and can by its words but imperfectly represent foreign sounds; and ignoring also that if the same system of writing is used to represent two distinct languages, while the older sounds

are retained for spelling purposes,<sup>1</sup> although the written words mean the same in both languages, the sounds are different; and therefore the confusion as to the right rendering of the words must be almost absolute.

Thus it was with the Babylonian form of writing, and in this manner came about the large and intricate system of writing which the Assyrians used.

The Archaic and Hieroglyphic forms, out of which all the others were developed, the Accadians originated in the following way. They commenced by expressing objects by hieroglyphics, namely, by representing the objects themselves, such as a fish by a picture of a fish. Afterwards they learnt to use ideographs, or symbols of ideas, such as a star for the idea of God. Finally they achieved the expression of complex ideas by a further development of ideographs, namely, by combining several ideographs together in order to represent one single thing.

This picture-writing, although intelligible enough to the Accadians, appears to us but an incomplete and clumsy method of transmitting and perpetuating thought, for every picture and symbol could have a variety of significations, and represent a number of different but kindred things, while there was no means of showing the exact sense in which the hieroglyphics and ideographs were used. Thus in Egyptian we find two legs might simply represent the legs of a man, but also they might denote "walking," "going," "running," "standing," "support,"

<sup>1</sup> In this way the Normans could read the symbol x dix, but retain the Saxon ten, and use it to spell words as tent, xt.

and even "growth;" and their signification had to be divined by the reader without further explanation or assistance.

Picture-writing, moreover, could only place images and symbols side by side, and leave the connection between them to be guessed at or imagined; it could neither show the distinction between the different parts of speech, nor note the flexions and tenses of the verbs and the number and case of the nouns, nor fill up the gaps of thought with adverbs, conjunctions, pronouns, etc.

The first of these difficulties was never overcome, and polyphony (*i.e.*, the use of one symbol for several sounds)<sup>1</sup> remained always one of the greatest complications of the language.

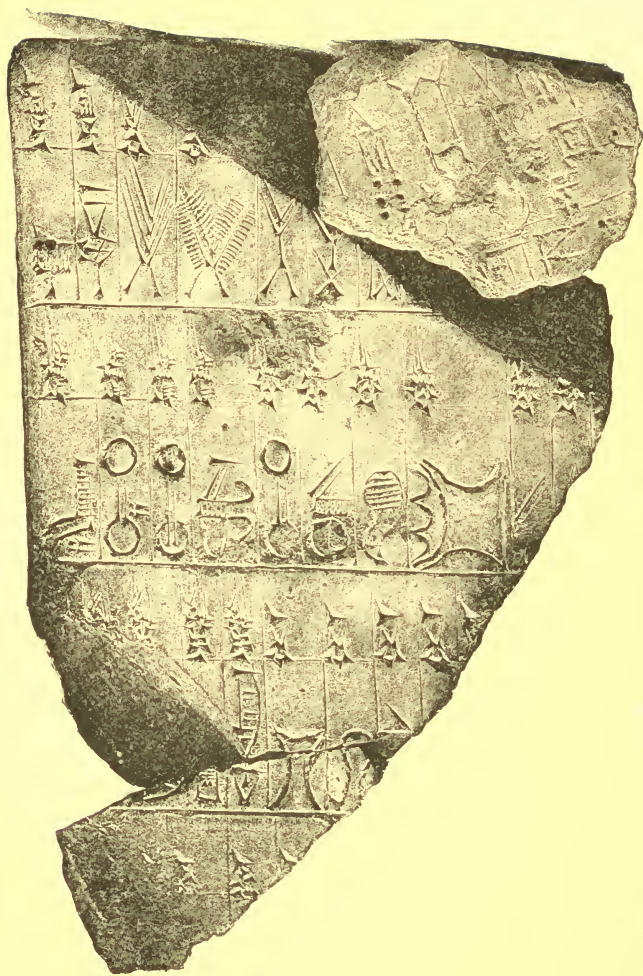
The second difficulty disappeared as time went on, for the hieroglyphics and ideographs lost their purely representative value, and were thought of as sounds as well as objects and ideas; and thus the scribes learnt to express sounds independently of pictures, and to create words, and thus the writing was rendered agglutinative.

A further improvement of the Archaic form was the cuneiform (wedge-shaped or arrow-headed) mode of transcription. It is supposed that originally the Turanian scribes used some material like leather for writing purposes. While this was the case the scribes had unlimited space for their pictures. But after a time burnt bricks




<sup>1</sup> A very good example of polyphony is Archbishop Whately's letter to his wife:—







"i o no o but i o thee.  
o o no o but o o me."





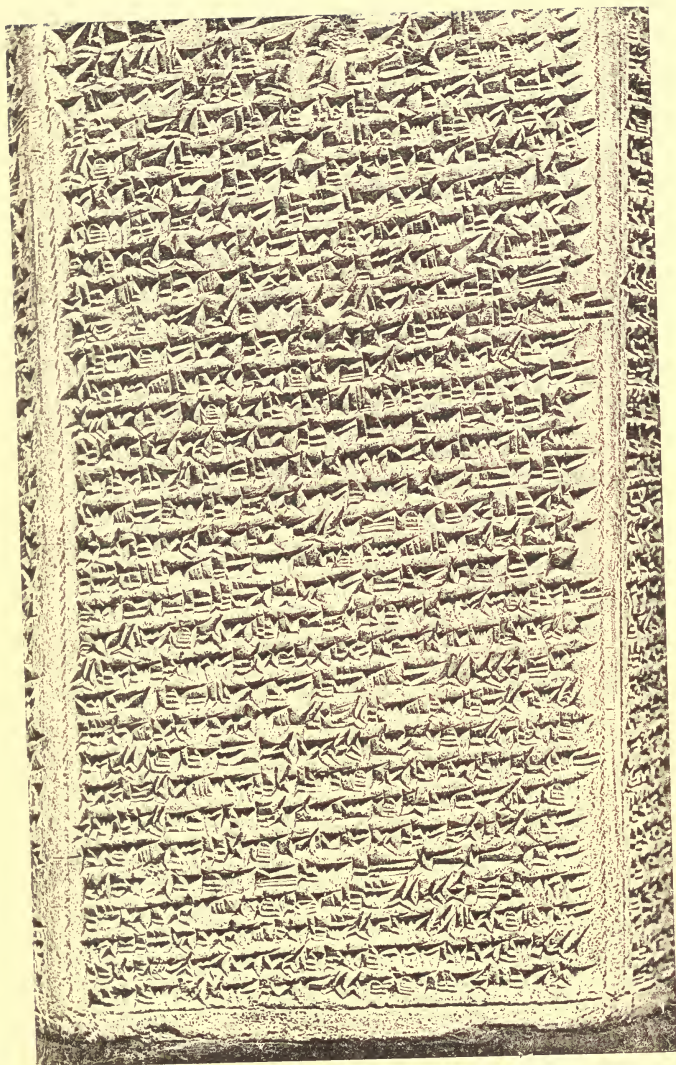
Fragment now in the British Museum showing primitive Hieroglyphics and Cuneiform Characters side by side.

took the place of the leather, and then picture-writing on any extended scale ceased to be possible. The impress of the style upon the wet clay caused angles to supersede curves, and circles to make way for straight lines, and each line to assume a wedge-like form, with its broad triangular end terminating in a point. Thus, one sign horizontal , vertical , and bent in the form of a hook , began to be used to form groups in the place of hieroglyphics and ideographs; and, owing to the superior quickness and ease with which the new characters could be written, picture-writing sank into a secondary place, and was only used for special purposes, while degenerated hieroglyphics and ideographs became the cursive hand of the scribes.

How long hieroglyphics and ideographs took in passing into cuneiform writing it is impossible to say. A fragment of a tablet in the British Museum gives some of the primitive hieroglyphics side by side with the cuneiform characters corrupted from them. In this are seen hieroglyphics which have ceased to be pictures, but in which the characteristic wedge has not yet appeared, and in which the lines are drawn of the same breadth throughout, are joined together, and are circular. The following primitive hieroglyphic, side by side with the cuneiform group of characters conventionalized from it, will give some idea of the way in which the change came about. A comb, which was originally represented  or  , became in cuneiform   and .







Part of an Assyrian Cylinder containing Hezekiah's Name.







The following is the transliteration and translation of the transcription  
on page 44.


29. D.P.\* H<sub>a</sub> za-ki-ya-u  
Hezekiah
30. [sar] D.P. Ya-u-da-ai id-di-nu-su nak-ris a-na zil-li e-pu-su  
king of the Jews they accounted him an enemy. Because of the evil they had done.
31. ip-luk lab-ba-su-un sarrani mat mu-šu-ri  
their hearts feared. The kings of the country of Egypt,
32. D.P. šabi D.P. mitpani D.P. rucubaté D.P. sisē sa sar D.P. Me-luh-ḫi  
the soldiers, bows, chariots, horses of the king of Meluhhi,
33. e-mu-ki la ni-ba ik-te-ru-nim-ma il-li-ku  
a force without number they brought together and they marched to

---

\* D.P. stands for "Determinative Prefix." There are about twenty-five of them in Assyrian.

The D.P. , the sign meaning "heaven," or anything in heaven, is put before the name of a god.

The D.P. , the sign meaning "country," is put before the name of a country.

The D.P. , the sign meaning "city," is put before the name of a city, and so on.

34. ri-šu-uš-šu-un. i-na ta-mar-ti D.P. Al-ta-ku-u  
*their aid. In the sight of the city Altaku*
35. el-la-mu-u-a ši-id-ru sit-ku-nu u-sa-a'-lu  
*before me the order of battle they had placed, they appealed to*
36. D.P. kakki-su-un i-na tukulti D.P. Assur beli-ya it-ti-su-un  
*their weapons. By the support of Assur my lord with them*
37. am-da-ḫi-iz-ma as-ta-kan hapikta-su-un  
*I fought and I accomplished their overthrow ;*
38. D.P. beli-rukubate u ablani sarrani D.P. Mu-ṣur-ra-ai  
*the charioteers and the sons of the kings of the Egyptians*
39. a-di D.P. beli-rukubate sa sar D.P. Me-luḫ-hi bal-ḏu-šu-un  
*together with the charioteers of the king of Meluḫḫi alive*
40. i-na ḳabal tam-ḫa-ri ik-su-da kata-ai D.P. Al-ta-ku-u  
*in the midst of battle my two hands captured. The city Altaku*
41. D.P. Ta-am-na-a al-me aks-ud as-lu-la sal-la-sun  
*and the city Tāmnā I besieged I captured I spoiled their spoil.*

## CHAPTER IV.

## ASSYRIAN LITERATURE.

THE Accadians, when the Shemites came among them, already possessed written books in the form of inscribed tablets. The invaders learnt to read this literature, and soon they desired to write similar books for themselves. Therefore, after adapting the Accadian written words to the expression of their own tongue, they attempted the composition of original works. In this they failed, however, almost entirely, for their powers of imagination, feeling, and expression, could not compare with those of the Accadians, and at the best their literature was but a feeble copy of that of Accad. So all they could do was to stock their libraries with Accadian books, to which they attached Babylonian translations; and the rest of their literature was derived from Accadian originals, or based upon Accadian texts. Gradually the Babylonians gained possession of the whole land, and the Accadians died out, or became incorporated in the Babylonian race, and the language of Accad ceased to be a vulgar tongue, and became a learned language, only known to the scribes. But the books of this marvellous people yet remain to point out that they were the earliest civilisers of Western Asia; that to them the arts and sciences, the philosophy, and many of the religious traditions, not

only of the Babylonians and Assyrians, but also of the Phœnicians and Syrians, have to be traced; that from them too the germs of Greek art, and a great part of the Greek pantheon and mythology, originally came; that both Jerusalem and Athens were profoundly influenced by their ideas; and that much of our present culture had its first starting-point in primæval Accad.

The Assyrians took with them out of Babylonia a knowledge of Accadian literature, and probably a few Accadian books with Babylonian translations. They were soldiers and legislators, not thinkers or scribes. They possessed even less originality than the inhabitants of their old home, and thus, not only did they borrow their religion, science, and art from Chaldea, but thence also they took their literature.

The first Assyrian library was that at Calah, which was established about 1300 B.C. Of this our knowledge is small.

The great library of Assyria was the one erected by Assur-bani-pal at Nineveh; this was built about the year 670 B.C., and contained some 30,000 tablets. Hither the decaying literature of Babylonia was brought by Assur-bani-pal, the conqueror of Babylon; and the shelves were filled with Accadian books. The study of the Accadian tongue was revived, and the language of Accad was written not only with Babylonian translations, but also with Assyrian equivalents.

This library of Assur-bani-pal was discovered in 1850, and many of the clay and brick books were brought to

England, and now have a place in the Kouyunjik gallery of the British Museum. Fragments of the library catalogue have also been found, and these show that the tablets were arranged methodically, and numbered ; and that the library contained historical and mythological documents, religious records, legal, geographical, astronomical, and astrological treatises ; poetical compositions ; lists of stones, birds, and beasts ; commercial transactions, royal proclamations, and petitions to the king.

The literature treats of Chaldean history from its earliest beginning, which is lost in fabulous antiquity, and has a far-reaching background of myth. In the antediluvian period, strange composite creatures, half-men, half-fish, were supposed to have existed, and to have ascended from the ocean to teach the inhabitants of Babylonia the rudiments of civilization ; and a quotation from an Accadian text, embodied in an Assyrian reading-book of the Accadian language, states how "their god to the waters they restored, to the house of his gifts he descended."

The Assyrian librarians, however, cared more about the history of Babylonia after the Deluge than before, because it dealt with human heroes, and men of fame and power. Xisuthrus, Etanna, Tammuz, and Gisdhubar were the four characters whose deeds the poets and scribes loved to dwell upon. Gisdhubar was the subject of numberless legends and lays, and his adventures form the connecting thread in the great Babylonian epic which incorporates the story of the Flood, and the ark



wherein Xisuthrus was saved. This epic is in twelve books, arranged upon an astronomical principle, each book answering to an appropriate sign of the Zodiac, and the month of the Accadian year. Thus the story of the Deluge is an episode of the eleventh book, which corresponds with the sign Aquarius, and the "rainy month" of the Accadian calendar. The text of the poem which we possess is a Semitic translation from an Accadian original, and is about 4,000 years old, being written more than 2,000 years before Christ. Like most epics, it was probably of slow growth, and in its final form was pieced together out of earlier materials, and for the first origin of the lays we must go back to a past already half-forgotten in the days of Abraham.

Gisdhubar is a solar hero, and thus his twelve adventures (like the twelve labours of Herakles) mark the passage of the sun through the twelve months of the year. Like the sickening sun of winter, Gisdhubar sickens in the autumnal month of October, and does not recover strength until bathed in the waters of the eastern sea. Then he wanders to the boundaries of the world, where scorpion-men guard the gate of the sun, "their crown at the lattice of heaven, under hell their feet," and on through the sandy desert, "the pathway of the sun," until he reaches the borders of the sea, and the ocean gates, and on, and on, "to the land of the silver sky."

Xisuthrus is the hero of the Deluge, who is warned by Ea, the god of the deep, of the flood of waters by

which the wickedness of man is about to be punished ; and who is told to build a ship six hundred cubits long, and sixty cubits broad and high, wherein to save himself and his family. The pious Xisuthrus obeys the divine command, and after pitching the vessel within and without, and offering a sacrifice to the gods, he enters into the ship with his people and treasures, and the beasts of the field, and commits himself to the care of the supernatural powers. For seven days the storm lasts, rain-clouds cover the mountains, and the pilot steers the ark over the waters of the Deluge. Destruction and ruin prevail, and "the gods in terror flee to the highest heaven of Anu." At length the flood ceases. Xisuthrus opens the window of his ark, and looks forth. On all sides he sees desolation, corpses floating upon the waters, and no sign of dry land. Finally the ark rests on the mountain of Nizir, "the mountain of the world," which the Accadians believed to be the cradle of their race, and, like another Olympus, the habitation of the gods. Then the Chaldean Noah sends forth first a dove, and after that a swallow, but the birds find no resting-place for their feet, and both return to the ark. A raven is despatched, and this feeds on the bodies of the dead, and "wanders away and does not return." So Xisuthrus knows that the land is dry ; and he leaves the ark and disperses the animals "to the four winds." He builds an altar on the mountain, and pours forth bowls of wine by sevens (seven being a sacred number with the Accadians as with the Hebrews). The gods "gather like flies over

the sacrifice," descending to the earth by the golden bridge of the rainbow. Bel makes a covenant with Xisuthrus, and swears not to destroy mankind by the waters of a flood any more. Then Xisuthrus is translated, and his followers travel westward, and find a home in the plains of Babylonia.

After the settlement in Chaldea, Etanna, and seven spirits subject to him, build a city of brick. This may possibly have been the place where the tower of Babel (or Babylon) stood, the edifice whose head was made in order to reach up to heaven. Sar-tuli-elli, "the king of the holy mound," raised the building with the impious purpose of storming the skies; but the work, which was carried on with much labour during the day, was blown down by the winds at night; the builders were "confounded and scattered abroad," and their counsel and speech were "made strange." The ruined tower was finished by Nebuchadnezzar, and its remains, as Birs-Nimrûd, with seven stages dedicated to the sun, the moon, and the five planets known to the ancients, have long excited the wonder of travellers.

The Chaldean legend of the creation which has reached us dates from the time of Assur-bani-pal. Older editions of it will doubtless one day be discovered, for it can scarcely have been originated then; but at present we only possess a few fragments of inscribed tablets written at that period. These fragments, although much mutilated by fire and time, have been pieced together, and read. Their contents give us the following particulars:

1. An account of the chaos, and the generation of the gods. 2. An account of the foundation of the deep. 3. An account of the creation of land. 4. An account of the creation of the heavenly bodies. 5. An account of the creation of land animals.

Many tales were told in Accad of the Titanic races of the ancient world, and of the wars of the gods and giants. One war in heaven was from time immemorial a subject of Accadian poetry, namely, that of the seven evil spirits, or storm-clouds, against the moon.

Ishtar, the moon-goddess (who subsequently became identical with the planet Venus), was a favourite heroine in Accadian tales. She loved Tammuz, the beautiful sun-god, who was slain "by the tusk of winter;" and after his death she descended into Hades in order to seek and find him. At the gate of the Under-world she demanded entrance of the porter, threatening to "raise the dead to be devourers of the living" if the doors were not opened. The porter went to Nin-ki-gal, the Queen of Hades, and obtained an order for her admittance, but he was also instructed to strip off her clothing like the other shades, "according to ancient custom." So Ishtar entered the land of death, and passed through its seven gates, leaving with the warder of each portal one of her adornments: her crown, her earrings, her necklace, her mantle, her girdle, her bracelet, and her tunic. At last she stood bare before Nin-ki-gal, who first derided her, and then ordered the plague-demon to smite her with diseases in all her limbs. Thus the

goddess remained in darkness and misery until the affairs of the upper-world became disturbed. Then Ea created a being called "the renewing light," and sent it to Hades with a message ordering her release. Nin-ki-gal, on receiving the command, "strikes her forehead, and bites her finger," and threatens to punish the envoy with grievous pains ; but, not daring to thwart Ea, she bids her satellite unveil the tablets of destiny, seat the spirits of earth on their thrones, give Ishtar the waters of life to drink, and lead her out of Hades. So the moon-goddess passes once more through the seven gates, and at each gate she receives back one of the ornaments of which she has been deprived, even as the waxing moon recovers once more the ornaments of light of which she has been stripped through her waning quarter.

Many other such mythological poems were conceived by the Accadians, all of interest, but too numerous to be mentioned. They were handed on to the Phœnicians in one direction, the Greeks in another ; and so in various ways they have become the heritage of all the civilized world ; and now they are read in their original form, and in the language of the people whose ideas they first embodied.

The religious poems of the Accadians were mostly composed after the advent of the Shemites. Previous to this they appear to have been Shamanistic in their religion, seeing a spirit in every object or force of nature, and believing that their priests (or rather sorcerers)

could work good or evil by the use of magical charms. Under the influence of the more practical Shemites they arranged their higher gods in hierarchic triads, and merged together the multitudinous spirits among the six hundred spirits of earth and the three hundred spirits of heaven. A compromise appears to have taken place between Accadian and Semitic religious conceptions, and the sorcerer gave way to the priest, and the adoration of things to the worship of abstractions, and the people began to adore special deities, such as the sun-god, the moon-god, and the sky.

It was during this movement of religious reform that most of the Chaldean hymns were composed. The following is one addressed to the sun-god :

“ O lord, the illuminator of darkness, thou that openest the face of sorrow, merciful god that liftest up the fallen ; thou that supportest the weak, unto thy light look the great gods. The spirits of earth all of them bow before thy face ; the language of praise as one word thou directest ; the host of their heads bow before the light of the mid-day sun.

“ Yea, thou art their light in the vault of the far-off heaven.

“ Of the broad earth the banner art thou. Men far and wide bow before thee, and rejoice.”

Doubtless this change of belief came about with much mental pain, and the loss of their cradle faith was a trial to the ancient Accadians, although it gave way to a

wider creed. Yet this does not account for the mournful tone which gradually crept over Accadian poetry after the people came in contact with the Shemites ; neither does the fact of their subjection by a stronger race, nor their slow extinction, explain the conviction of sin which they began to experience, the need they felt of a redeemer to intercede with the offended deities, and their use of sacrifices. It is believed that the Shemites must have introduced these ideas, for after their arrival in Chaldea the poems of the people became melancholy dirges and penitential psalms. Thus a poet, writing at this period, cries, in the anguish of a self-convicted conscience :

“O my lord, my transgression is great ; many are my sins.

“O my god, thou knowest that I knew not that my sin is great, my transgressions many.

“The transgressions that I committed I knew not.

“The sin that I sinned I knew not.

“The forbidden thing did I eat.

“The forbidden thing did I trample upon.

“My lord in the wrath of his heart did trouble me.

“God in the strength of his heart did punish me.

“God in the strength of his heart has overwhelmed me.

“God, who knew I knew not, has caused darkness.

“I lay on the ground, and no one seized me by the hand.

“I wept, and my palms no one took.

“I cried aloud ; there was no one that would hear me.

"I was in darkness and trouble ; I lifted not myself up.

"To my god my distress I referred, my prayer I addressed.

"How long, O my god, shall I suffer ?

"The sin that I have sinned to blessedness turn.

"The transgression I have committed let the wind carry away.

"My manifold affliction like a garment destroy.

"O my god, seven times seven are my transgressions ; my transgressions are before me."

The line, "the forbidden thing did I eat," recalls to our mind the story of the Garden of Eden ; and the repeated assertion of innocence, and the words, "God, who knew that I knew not, hath caused darkness," lead us to think that the Accadians must have heard of the Divine fiat ordaining that all must suffer for the disobedience of Adam and Eve. Curiously enough, about the period when this poem was written we read of a belief arising in the primal purity and innocence of the human race ruined by the successful temptation of the dragon Tiamat ; and of the institution of sacrifices, in which men offered their nearest and dearest for the sins of their souls : and the sinner gave "the head of his child for his own head, and the brow of his child for his own brow, and the breast of his child for his own breast ;" and of Merodach, a form of the Sun-god, being considered a mediator and redeemer able to intercede with the offended deities on behalf of man.



After a time these religious poems were collected together and formed into a prayer-book, to be used in religious services ; and when the civilization of Accad became the property of the Semitic conquerors, this collection of sacred poetry continued to be the authoritative text-book of the priesthood throughout Babylonia and Assyria. As elsewhere, a superstitious reverence seems to have been attached to the mere letter of the sacred text ; and though later on Semitic and Assyrian translations were placed by the side of the Accadian words, the priests were always made to recite the hymns in the extinct language of ancient Accad.

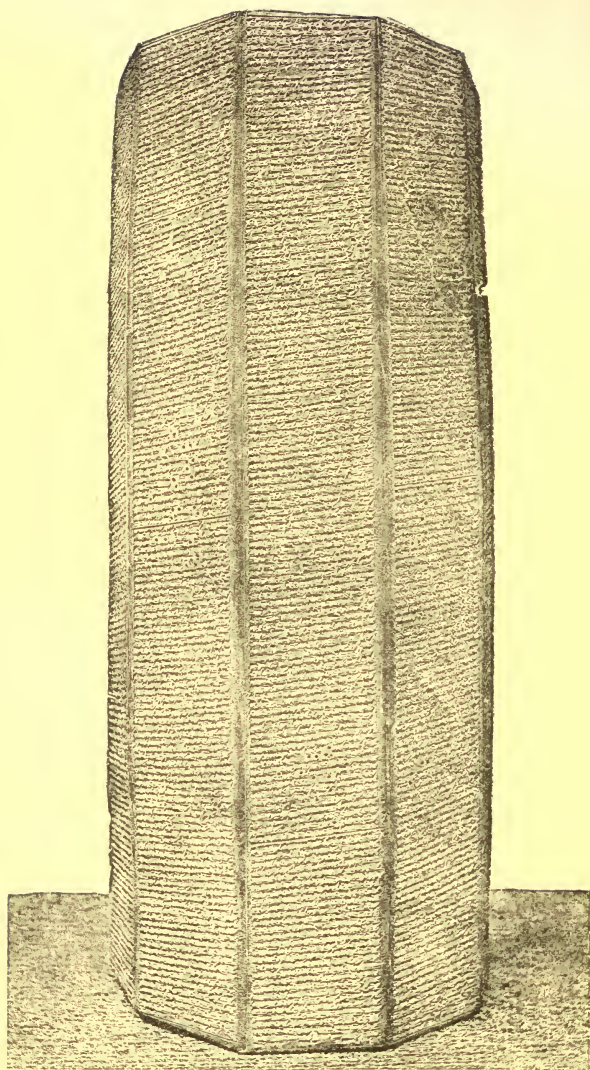
A belief in sorcery and charms lived on side by side with the new religion, and the formulæ of numberless spells and invocations have come down to us on the tablets. Thus we read : "He who makes an image to injure a man, the evil face, the evil eye, the evil mouth, the evil philtre, avert, O spirit of heaven, avert, O spirit of earth." Again : "Let the sorcerer sit on the right, and work a charm on the left. Knot the knots twice seven times, and wind them about the head of the sick and about his limbs like fetters. On his bed let her sit, and the waters of magic sprinkle upon him."

Science cannot be said to have flourished in Chaldea. The inductive method, by which alone it can be pursued, was never practised ; and although the ideas of the Accadians contained germs of truth and great discoveries, the inquirers were led away by their own fancies and imaginations, and thus they effected no good

results. Astronomy and astrology absorbed the attention of the scientific men. Observatories were erected in every city, and fortnightly reports were sent to the king by the astronomers royal. A great astronomical work, in seventy-two books, called "The Observations of Bel," was written for the library of Sargon. This work had an immense reputation among the Babylonians and Assyrians. The British Museum possesses portions of several editions of it, made for the library at Nineveh. Astrology was also carefully cultivated, and future events were foretold from present occurrences by professional diviners. Many of the omens from dreams and such sources were extremely trivial, but they sufficed to terrify the superstitious Babylonians, and to influence their actions.

The library at Nineveh was rich in legislative documents. The oldest code of laws in the world, so far as we know, is an Accadian one, of which the British Museum possesses the concluding part. From this we learn that an oath was required every day of the Accadian judges to the effect that they would act according to justice and precedent. That four thousand years ago, all that a married woman possessed was her own property. That a son who denied his father had to give a pledge and a sum of silver; but he who denied his mother had his hair cut off, and was imprisoned in a house of correction. Other documents dealing with the legislative affairs of the Babylonians, tell us that the high-roads of Chaldea were placed





AN ASSYRIAN BOOK.

under the care of commissioners ; that the country was divided into districts for the purpose of taxation ; that houses and other property were sold or leased much as at the present period ; and that in the eighth and seventh centuries before Christ, Nineveh was a bustling centre of trade, in which business transactions were carried on briskly by a mercantile class composed of men of various nations. The collection of tablets contains also cheques from a large banking firm which is held to have flourished in Babylon during the reign of Nebuchadnezzar's father. These were found enclosed in earthenware jars, serving the purpose of our modern safes. The founder of the firm was a man named Egibi, whose descendants carried on business through five generations, the son being taken by the father into partnership so soon as he arrived at years of discretion. Among the deeds is the banking calendar, in which the days are noted as lucky days and unlucky days.

The Assyrian tablets which have been found are chiefly historical ones ; the most important being chronological records, which place our knowledge of the history of the country on a solid foundation, and enable us to fix the exact dates of the kings ; also copies of royal letters, despatches, and treaties, which give particulars concerning the conquests and triumphs represented by the reliefs. Lacking originality, the Assyrians composed very few books themselves, but were content to perpetuate the wisdom of their predecessors, those

wonderful Accadians from whom so many of our present customs and ideas have been derived, and who four thousand years ago possessed a civilization which in many of its details resembled that of our own country and time.



## CHAPTER V.

## RELIGION OF THE ASSYRIANS.

THE religion of the Assyrians was polytheistic, and they worshipped a pantheon of gods, over which Assur reigned as the supreme deity. Assur was called "the god who created himself," and thus his nature remained a mystery ; but the other gods were deifications of creative and celestial powers, also local spirits or genii.

Assur had many titles of honour. He was called "the king of all the gods," "the father of the gods," "he who rules supreme over the gods," "the great lord ;" and "Assur, my lord," was the usual manner in which he was addressed by worshippers and supplicants. From the beginning of the Assyrian kingdom his name was identical with that of the country ; the religion was called "the worship of Assur," and the people were described as "the servants of Assur," and their enemies as "the enemies of Assur." To the very end of the empire he remained the supreme native deity, and was never superseded, but was regarded by the Assyrians as the first and highest of the divine agents who rule over earth and heaven.

Throughout all the inscriptions Assur is spoken of as the special tutelary deity of the Assyrian kings. He it

was who placed monarchs upon their thrones, made their reigns glorious, lengthened the years of their dominion, preserved their power, and rendered their names famous. To him they looked to grant them all the wishes of their hearts, to give them victory over their enemies, and to allow them to be succeeded on their thrones by their sons, and their sons' sons, to a remote posterity. In war they represented themselves as carrying on his service in order to spread his worship, and after ravaging and destroying a country, they set up the images or emblems of Assur, and forced the vanquished nation to pay homage to his name.

The favourite emblem under which they appear to have represented Assur in their sculptures was the Feroher, namely, a winged circle or globe, from which a figure in



THE FEROTHER.

a horned cap is frequently seen to issue, sometimes simply holding a bow, sometimes shooting his arrows against the king's enemies. This em-

blem has been explained in a variety of ways, but the most probable conjecture would seem to be that the circle typifies eternity, while the wings express omnipresence, and the human figure symbolises wisdom or intelligence. The representations of the Feroher are numerous, and differ one from another; sometimes the figure which issues from the globe has no bow, but merely extends the right hand; occasionally both hands are stretched out, and the left holds a ring or chaplet; and in one instance the figure is omitted, and merely a



pair of hands are shown coming from behind the disk, the right open and exhibiting the palm, the left closed and holding a bow. Frequently all signs of a person are dispensed with, and the winged circle appears alone, with the disk either plain or ornamented.

In several representations three heads are given instead of one, the central figure having on either side of it a head resting upon the feathers of the wings. This has led to the supposition that the supreme god of the Assyrians was a triune deity ; but as nothing in the inscriptions, so far as yet known, confirms this idea, it can hardly be accepted as an explanation of the phenomenon. Probably the heads are those of two other gods who accompany Assur, and therefore are placed by his side. The Feroher is generally found in the sculptures in immediate connection with the king. The monarch wears it embroidered upon his robes, carries it engraven upon his cylinder, represents it above his head, stands or kneels in adoration before it, fights under its shadow, returns under its protection victorious from battle, and places it conspicuously in scenes where he is himself represented. In all these circumstances the emblem conforms to the actions of the king. If the monarch is fighting, Assur too has his arrow on the string, and pointed against the king's enemies ; if the king returns from a victory, Assur holds the disused bow in his left hand, and his right hand is outstretched and elevated ; if the scene is peaceful, Assur's bow disappears altogether ; if a secular act is represented, the

circle alone is seen and no human figure at all ; if the king worships, then Assur holds out his hand as a sign of approval, encouragement, and assistance.

In close connection with the symbol of Assur we frequently find "the sacred tree." This was an emblem of life, and in some mysterious way attached to the worship of the great god, for figures are represented kneeling in adoration before it, and bearing mystic offerings to hang upon its boughs. The simplest form of the sacred tree consists of a single pair of rams' horns, surmounted by a capital composed of two pairs of rams' horns separated by several horizontal bands, above which there is first a scroll resembling that which usually surmounts the winged circle, and then a flower very much like the honeysuckle ornament of the Greeks. More advanced specimens show the pillar elongated, with a capital in the middle in addition to the capital at the top, while the blossom above the upper capital, and generally the stem also, throws out a number of similar smaller blossoms, which are sometimes replaced by fir-cones and pomegranates. In the most elaborately portrayed trees there is, besides the stem and the blossoms, a network of branches, which forms a sort of arch, and surrounds the tree as it were with a frame.

The gods worshipped in the next degree to Assur were Babylonian deities, and with Assur they formed the Assyrian Pantheon. The gods had their corresponding goddesses, but the only important goddess was Ishtar.

	Assur, supreme. <sup>1</sup>	
Anu		} Creative powers.
Bel		
Ea	Lord of the Deep	
Sin	Moon	} Celestial powers.
Shamas	Sun	
Rimmon	Sky-god	
Marduk	Jupiter	} Five planets.
Ishtar	Venus	
Adar	Saturn	
Nergal	Mars	
Nabu	Mercury	
Tasmetu	The Hearer.	
Nusku	Wife of Tasmetu.	

The worship of Anu was of very ancient date, and from the earliest times he had a temple in Assur, the first Assyrian capital. He was called "the old Anu," "the original chief," "the lord of spirits and demons;" and he was in some way connected in the minds of the Assyrians with the idea of Death, and thus termed "the lord of darkness or death," and "the ruler of the far-off city."

Sin was the Moon-god, and his emblem resembled the crescent or new moon.

Shamas was the Sun-god, and his emblem was the four-rayed orb which the king wore round his neck, sometimes alone, sometimes conjoined with the emblem of the new moon.

<sup>1</sup> This is the most intelligible way of arranging the deities.

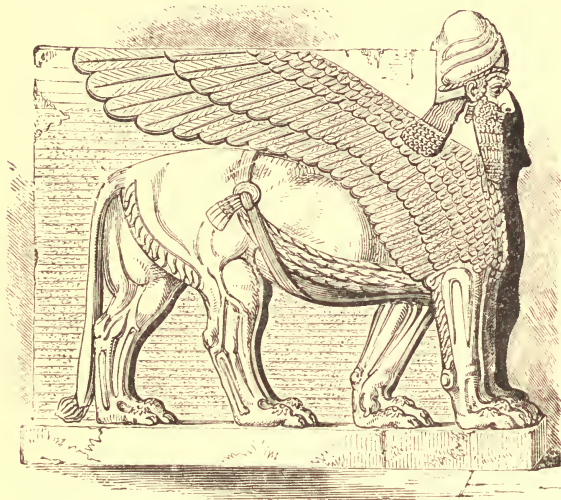
Rimmon was the god of the sky, and hence the lord of thunder, lightning, and storms. He was called "the destroyer of crops," "the rooter-up of trees," and "the scatterer of the harvest." But he was also the giver of rain and good seasons, and in this capacity he was termed "the lord of fecundity."

Ishtar was the special goddess of the Assyrian kings, who believed that she presided over their favourite diversion, the chase. They delighted to do her honour, and build temples to her fame, and called her "their lady," also "the queen of all the gods," "the mistress of earth and heaven." In general features she corresponded with the classical goddess Venus, also the Phœnician Astarte, and the Hebrew Ashtoreth ; but she also recalls the huntress Diana.

Adar and Nergal were the gods of hunting and war, and consequently very great favourites with their worshippers.

The genii were considered to be powers of good and evil. Sometimes they are represented in the sculptures as benignant spirits, with the head of a hawk upon a human body ; sometimes as malignant spirits, monsters, half-lion, half-eagle, or monsters having a human figure and the head of a lion, and the ears of an ass. The greater number of them appear to have belonged to the malignant type, and these fight against the gods, or contend one with another, armed with maces and daggers. The religion of the Assyrians was idolatrous. They worshipped the *images* of the gods, and believed in the

supernatural power of the *emblems*. This is proved by their carrying off the idols of a country, after conquering the inhabitants, and setting up the emblems of Assur instead ; for they hoped thus to deprive the people of their celestial protectors, and to establish their own god as sovereign of the land. Images of Ishtar and Nebo have



NERGAL.

been excavated and brought to England ; those representing Nebo are heavy and deficient in expression, but are not without a certain quiet dignity which impresses beholders. Numbers of small idols (probably private or household ones) have also been discovered ; these are made of clay, iron, and bronze.

The Assyrians worshipped their gods with burnt-

offerings, usually making a bull the object of sacrifice. One relief which has been discovered gives the whole of such a sacrificial scene. It portrays a god sitting at the entrance of a temple, and before him a priest in the act of paying homage. The king stands in front of a tall fire-altar, pouring a libation into a large bowl; and a number of priests lead a bull, holding him by a rope tied to his fore-legs a little above the hoof. The fire burning upon the altar is small, and thus it would appear that only a part of the animal is to be burnt, and that the rest will be consumed by the priests and the people.

The religious services were conducted with great magnificence, and accompanied by music and singing. The kings, who united in one the priestly and the regal characters, assisted the priests in offering sacrifices; and when engaged in this work, both priests and kings wore magnificent robes, embroidered with sacred emblems, such as the Feroher, the sacred tree, and the pomegranate; also armlets, necklets, and earrings. Offerings of gold, silver, and precious stones were liberally made by the worshippers; and all was done with a view to please and propitiate the superhuman powers, and to show forth the glory of the deities.

Occasionally a religious use was made of fasting. Then the king and his nobles put on sackcloth, abstained from food, and sprinkled their heads with ashes; the whole population suspended ordinary business and joined in prayer; and even the animals within the city walls were forced to fast and wear sackcloth. (Jonah iii. 5-9.)

The Assyrians believed in a future state for the soul of man after death, and depicted heaven and hell in vivid colours. Heaven they called "the abode of blessedness," "the home of life," "the land of the silver sky;" and the life of the blessed they described as an existence in which the happy ones reclined on couches, drank pure liquors, and fed on rich foods, in the company of friends and relatives, and in which the warrior was surrounded with the spoils he had taken in battle, and had his captives constantly paraded before his eyes.

Hell they called the kingdom of the under-world, and the queen who ruled over it they named Nin-ki-gal, "the lady of the great land." Seven walls encircled the realm of darkness, each having a gate and porter, the outer wall being a watery moat filled with "the waters of death which cleanse not the hands." In the innermost circle was situate the Palace of Justice, where the judge passed sentence on the souls of the dead. Here also rose the stream of "the waters of life," a draught of which was supposed to render spirits immortal, and admit purified souls to a happier state.

It is uncertain whether the Assyrians regarded Hades as a place of eternal punishment, or merely a state of purgatory in which souls were purified by trial and suffering, and thus made fit to enter the house of the gods. The poem which describes the descent of Ishtar to the under-world tells us that she went to—

"The land of no return, the regions of corruption, the house of corruption.

“To the house whose entrance has no exit.

“By the road whose going has no return.

“To the house at whose entrance they bridle in the light.

“A place where much dust is their food, their nourishment mud.

“Where light they see not ; in darkness they dwell.

“Over whose door and threshold are much dust.”

The souls of the righteous we know were supposed to pass at once into “the land of the silver sky ;” for when speaking of the death of a good man, the poet exclaims of his soul :—

“Like a bird to a lofty place may it fly,

“To the holy hands of its god may it return.”

And again :—

“Tempest in heaven, lightning on earth are raging.

“Of the brave man who was so strong the strength has departed.

“Of the servant righteous his strength returns not.

“The man in body very sick lies.

“The divine Ishtar, she with benignity smiles upon him.

“Where no one ever dwelt, from her mountain she descended.

“At the door of the sick man she spoke.

“The man moved. Who is there? Who comes?

“Ishtar, daughter of the god Sin.

The god, son of Bel.



“The god Marduk.

“The body of the sick man she approaches.

“The man, son of his god, let him depart.

“To the sun, greatest of the gods, be his return.

“The sun, greatest of the gods, into his hands may  
he the man’s soul receive.”



## CHAPTER VI.

## ARCHITECTURE AND ART.

THE greatest architectural work of the Assyrians which has yet been discovered is the ruin of the town of Dursagina, now called Khorsábád, a place ten miles distant from Nineveh to the northward. This town was built by Sargon about the year 721 B.C. The walls formed a square over one mile each way, the angles of the square facing the four cardinal points. Its outer wall, which was nearly forty-six feet thick, and had eight towers, was made of unburnt bricks covered externally with a coating of calcareous stone, and was raised upon a base of stone rubble.

A palace stood on the north-west side of the town. It was surrounded by a strong wall, constructed of blocks of hard limestone, and was built upon a platform shaped like a T, composed of unburnt bricks united with the same clay used to make them. The entrance to the palace was through an outer court, which lay upon a level with the town. This court had two enormous gateways ; both spanned across with arches of enamelled bricks, and both guarded by colossal animals. An inclined plane, or flight of steps, led to the first terrace, which was situated about twenty feet above the outer

court. Here the gate was again guarded by colossal creatures, having on either side three gigantic bulls, two of them fifteen feet high, and the third nineteen feet high; also by a colossal human figure, representing probably the god Adar, but called by most writers "the Assyrian Herakles." A suite of small-sized rooms occupied the terrace; these are supposed to have been the apartments of the soldiers whose duty it was to keep watch over the palace. The royal residence was built upon the second terrace, which lay about ten feet above the lower one. It was entered through a gateway flanked on either side by a colossal animal, and the gate opened into a court three hundred and fifty feet long and one hundred and seventy feet wide. Hence a passage led into an inner court, a square of one hundred and fifty feet. On the left side of this square stood the great state apartments, consisting of a suite of ten rooms, five of which were large, one long and narrow, and the other four either square or oblong. The most important of these rooms were two halls, one "the Hall of Punishment," in which the sculptures represent the king receiving prisoners, and punishing them either personally or by deputy; the other "the Temple Court," facing the temple (the remains of the temple are very slight) on the south-west, and having on the south-east a number of small buildings called "priests' rooms." The private apartments of the king were entered through the Temple Court, and had no other means of communication with the building.

An observatory was on the westerly side of the palace. It was an astronomical temple like the famous pyramids of stages in Chaldea, of which Birs Nimrûd, known to us as "the Tower of Babel," is a familiar instance. The number of its stages is not certain, only four remain, and the traces of colour shown by these, beginning with the lowest stage, indicate that the colours were white, black, red and blue, the tints of the Moon, Saturn, Mars, and Mercury.

In the Khorsábád Palace, as in the other palaces which have been excavated, the ground plans and some seventeen feet of their elevation are all that time and fire have spared us. The upper portion is wanting in every palatial building which has yet been found, and as the sculptures give no representations of royal residences, we are left in complete ignorance in respect to the height and roofing of the palaces. It is a question whether they had or had not any upper stories. All that we know about them is that they possessed two terraces joined together by some sort of staircase or inclined way; also that they had windows made by letting apertures into the thick walls. The buildings represented by the sculptures are seldom Assyrian structures, but generally foreign ones seen by the artists during military campaigns; and the few native representations shown by the reliefs belong to the sacred and not to the palatial type.

Several temples are seen on the reliefs. One from Nimroud is remarkable for the pattern on its pillars, and

its unique capitals. Another from Kouyunjik possesses several features of interest. Its body is a columnar structure, and it has at either corner a broad pilaster surmounted by a capital composed of two sets of volutes placed one above the other. Between the pilasters are two pillars resting upon rounded bases, and crowned with capitals not unlike the Corinthian. Above the pillars is a heavy cornice which projects considerably, and which is finished at the top by a row of gradines. At one side of the building is a small chapel or oratory, also finished with gradines; and in a road leading to the chapel, and at a short distance from it, stands an altar. A third kind of temple was the tower or ziggurat, which resembled the astronomical temple at Khorsábád. This type was built in stages, which varied in number, but which appear never to have exceeded seven. A ziggurat temple discovered at Nimroud has a square base one hundred and sixty-seven feet six inches each way, and is composed of a solid mass of sun-dried brick. Only one stage now remains, but from its pyramidal shape, and its general analogy to similar towers, it is believed that it must have had several stages. In its interior is a species of chamber or gallery, the object of which has not yet been explained, for it does not resemble the basement chambers so common in other temples, and which appear to have been shrines for the gods, and rooms in which the priests kept their vestments and sacred utensils. The decoration of the temples, so far as we know, was very similar to that of the palaces. The gateways were guarded by colossal

animals, and ornamented with coloured porcelain bricks and inscriptions. The doors turned upon pivots, and were either single or folding. Sculptures and coloured bricks decorated the passages and the walls of the chambers, but sometimes the walls were plastered, and then painted afterwards with figures or patterns. Concerning the roofs nothing certain can be said, but probably they were made of wood.

We know nothing of the domestic architecture of Assyria; for neither the inscriptions nor the sculptures give us information concerning the private houses of the people.

The fortifications of the towns consisted of a single battlemented wall, pierced with gates, and guarded by projecting towers. This wall surrounded the place, and in the sculptures we see it repeated sometimes twice or thrice in lines placed one above the other, the idea being to represent the defence of a city by two or three walls.

Bricks were almost universally used in Assyria for building purposes. This is curious, considering how much stone lay ready to hand. It would appear that the people had learnt a certain kind of architecture in Babylonia, where stone was rare, and lacking originality, they kept to the old materials after they settled on the banks of the Tigris. The abundance of stone in the country led them to use it sometimes for the facings of platforms and temples, for pavements, and for the lower part of walls; but in the main they used clay, having

been familiar with it in Chaldea. These bricks were of three kinds: burnt, sun-dried, and enamelled. The art of making burnt bricks was known in Babylonia at a very early period. Probably it was discovered by a fire being lighted on some clay soil, and thus teaching the fact that the action of heat renders clay firm and dry. These bricks were generally of a dark red or of a bright yellow colour, from one to two feet wide, and about three inches thick. Sun-dried bricks were made by ridding clay of all stones and foreign bodies, mixing it with chopped straw, in order to give it material consistence, washing it with water, placing it in square moulds, and then exposing it to the action of the sun, which had power in that hot climate to harden it within a few weeks. These sun-dried bricks seldom became quite dry, and when placed one upon another for building purposes, and cemented together with further wet clay, they soon lost their shape, and formed a thick mass, in which the separate bricks could scarcely be distinguished. This was the case with the platform of the Khorsábád palace, which has the appearance of being one great mass of hardened clay. Enamelled bricks were only half-baked, the colours being thus allowed to pass gradually into the pores of the clay, and spread over the whole surface of the bricks.

Basalt was used for building, but not to any great extent; also calcareous stone, including coarse alabaster.

Among the architectural works of the Assyrians we must notice lastly the transport of colossal human-

headed animals. This process is shown in the sculptures from the first conveyance of the rude stone from the quarry, to the raising of the gigantic sculptures in the gateways of the palaces and the temples. A boat is represented in the reliefs floating upon a river, and in it lies a huge block of stone somewhat elongated in form, so as to resemble an obelisk in the rough. The block exceeds the boat considerably in length, projecting beyond both the head and the stern, and is held in its place by upright beams fastened firmly to the sides of the vessel. Two cables passed through holes cut in the stone, and a third cable tied to a strong pin projecting from the head of the boat, are held by a number of men, who twist the ropes round their shoulders, and thus pull the boat up the stream. Some of the men walk in the water, some upon the river bank, and they are divided into bands, each band mustering about one hundred men. Taskmasters urge the workers on with swords and staves, while an overseer, seated upon the fore-part of the stone, beats time, and thus regulates the whole proceeding. The huge stone having been landed, and carved by the sculptors into the form of a human-headed animal, has then to be conveyed from the river side to the palace. To accomplish this, the colossal creature is placed horizontally upon a sledge similar in form to the boat in which it was carried from the quarry. Its head rests on the fore part of the sledge, which is curved upwards and strengthened by a thick beam, and its body is supported by props placed in different parts of the



boat, in order to secure an equal pressure at every point. The sledge, which stands upon rollers, is pulled by large numbers of workmen, probably captives from different conquered nations, for they wear different costumes. Carts laden with implements, and men bearing coils of rope, follow the procession. And the king himself surveys the work, seated in his chariot, surrounded by state officers.

Imitative art among the Assyrians consisted of statues, statuettes in clay, bas-reliefs, metal-castings, carvings in ivory, enamellings on brick, and intaglios on stones and gems.

The Assyrian statues which have been discovered are very unsatisfactory artistic productions. They are clumsy, coarse, and formal in design, and are generally characterized by flatness and want of breadth. The best specimen of them is the statue representing Assurnazal-habal, which is now in the British Museum. This is smaller than life, being about three and a-half feet high. The features are majestic and well marked, the hair and beard elaborately curled, and the arms and hands well shaped. The dress descends to the ground, and thus all the lower part of the figure is hidden from view.

The clay statuettes have little artistic merit. They are made of fine terra-cotta, either burnt red or glazed. Some represent the goddess Ishtar; some an old man with curled beard and clasped hands, probably the god Nebo; others, which are weights are modelled in the

form of small ducks and dogs. The dogs are superior in workmanship to all the other statuettes, and have their names carefully inscribed upon their sides.

The bas-reliefs are by far the most important of all the Assyrian works of art. In them, almost exclusively, we can trace progress in style, and the artistic genius of the



ASSYRIAN BAS-RELIEF.

people. Low-relief was the mode in which the Assyrians expressed their religious thoughts and feelings, recorded the deeds of their kings, imitated animal and vegetable forms, illustrated mechanical processes, and depicted home-life and domestic occupation, landscapes, and

architecture. The reliefs may be divided under five principal heads :—

1. War scenes, including battles and sieges, naval expeditions, and triumphal returns after victories.
2. Religious scenes.
3. Processions, generally of tribute-bearers and of prisoners.
4. Hunting and sporting scenes.
5. Scenes of daily life, such as landscapes, gardens, temples, the transport of bulls, and other details of ordinary existence.

The earliest reliefs date from the ninth century before our era, and these are characterised by much spirit, variety, strength, and firmness, but also by heaviness, entire ignorance of perspective, and the rendering of both human and animal forms solely in profile, the only exceptions being, so far as we know, a few instances of lions' heads, and one human head on the ornamentation of a robe. The animals are executed with much more skill than the human forms; and this continued to be a characteristic of Assyrian art throughout its history. One of the best specimens of this period is a lion hunt, found at Nimroud. It is extremely simple and effective. The king, sitting in his chariot, forms the principal figure in the group, and his attitude is natural and graceful. The lion attacking the king is outlined with great spirit, and his head is masterly. His noble, upright form contrasts admirably with that of his fellow, a dead lion with drooping head and tail, which lies in front of the

royal chariot. The horses are the weakest part of the picture, for they show little vigour, and their forelegs are too slight. The religious and processional pieces of the period are stiff in the extreme; the battle scenes are over-crowded and confused; and the hunting scenes are, as a rule, badly done.

The second period of Assyrian imitative art extends from the latter part of the eighth to nearly the middle of the seventh century before Christ, and belongs to the reigns of three consecutive kings, Sargon, Sennacherib, and Êsar-haddon. The chief characteristic of this period is the progress made in vegetable forms and in backgrounds. The trees are still conventional; but the date-palms, firs, and vines are delineated with skill. Nature is studied, and birds are seen in the woods, and fish in the rivers. The horses and other animals are more skilfully designed, but the human figures remain much as before. The manipulation is improved, and the outline is more flowing; but the scenes have lost their grandeur of composition, and have become comparatively tame. The highest perfection of Assyrian art is in the third period, which extends from 667 B.C. to about 640 B.C., and synchronizes with the reign of Assur-bani-pal. The human figures at this time are beautifully finished, the vegetable forms are less conventional, and the animals are drawn with freedom, spirit, and variety. Assyrian art, so far as now known, has nothing finer of animal drawing than a relief of this date, which was found at Konyunjik. It represents a lion biting a chariot wheel. The king

of beasts has been wounded ; and in his mad agony he springs at the chariot which contains his enemy, clutches the wheel with his two fore-paws, and grinds it frantically between his teeth.

The Assyrians appear to have applied little colour to statuary, but to have left the stone much in its natural condition. The slabs exhibit now only faint and occasional signs of colour ; but the explorers tell us that at the time of discovery the traces were much more abundant, and that the tints only faded when exposed to the air. Neither the flesh of the men nor the bodies of the animals now show signs of paint ; and thus it would appear that colour was sparingly applied, and was confined to the hair, eyes, and beards of the men, the fringes of the dresses, the horses' trappings, and to foliage. The colours found on the reliefs are red, blue, black, and white. The red is bright, and is applied to the claws of birds, to quivers, maces, flowers and the fringes of dresses. Blue (probably once green) is employed to colour foliage. White is used for the inner part of eyes. Black is used for hair and beards. The enamelled bricks teach us best the ideas of the Assyrians with regard to colour : these are of varied hues, pale green, pale yellow, dark brown, and white ; also of intense blue, bright red, and bright green. In every case the colours harmonize, are carefully used, give no harsh contrasts, and bear a close resemblance to nature.

The ornamental metal work of the Assyrians is of three kinds : 1. Figures, or parts of figures, in solid shape ; 2. Castings in low-relief ; 3. Embossed or *repoussé* work,

beat out with the hammer, and finished afterwards with a graver or cutting tool. The solid castings consist chiefly of lions, which were used as weights. The castings in low-relief formed the ornamentation of thrones, stools, and perhaps chariots, and represent human and animal figures. The embossed work is very curious, and is best illustrated by the Balawat Gates and the Nimroud bowls, which are in the British Museum. Bronze was the material used by the Assyrians for ornamental metal work, composed of one part of tin to ten of copper. It is supposed that the Phœnicians had a good deal to do with this work, also with the ivory-work, which bears traces of Egypto-Phœnician art. Probably the ivories were sent as Phœnician tribute, and copied from Egyptian models.

The intaglios are cut upon jasper, agate, cornelian, and other stones. The favourite subjects represented are religious scenes, sacred animals, warriors pursuing enemies, and the king slaying lions. The stones vary in shape, but they are usually cylindrical.

Assyrian art is purely imitative. This is accounted for by the fact that the Assyrians were a very practical people, and sought rather to represent actual things than to enter the realms of imagination, and portray the ideal and the spiritual. They appreciated the useful more than the ornamental, and occupied themselves solely with representations of visible objects and scenes. They lacked originality, and thus they were content to imitate nature, and to create nothing of their own.

With the exception of a few mythic figures (and these, it must be remembered, are copies of those in Babylonia), there is nothing in Assyrian art which is not imitated from nature. These imitations, however, show us a people patient, laborious, and above all, truthful. Thus they make colossal animals with five legs, in order that from every point of view they may be seen with the right number, and in the reliefs they represent ladders lying edgeways upon the walls, so that spectators may understand that ladders and not poles are represented. It is this spirit of faithfulness and honesty which strikes us more than anything else in the sculptures and reliefs. The careful finish, the minute detail, the elaboration of every particular; these arouse our admiration. Further, the sculptures and reliefs have a boldness, a grandeur, a dignity, a strength, an appearance of life which excite our surprise, when we remember that the works were executed when Greek art was still in its infancy. There is, of course, much that is barbaric about them; a want of grace, a want of freedom and correctness of outline; but all the same, they have a peculiar charm, for they appear to have been the work of brave, simple-minded men who lived while the civilization of the world was yet young. Moreover, we perceive growth in them, a promise of better things and higher excellence; and their largeness of conception inspires us with hope, for it shows art in its infancy, and with all the possibilities of the future lying above, beneath, and around.

## CHAPTER VII.

## MILITARY AND HUNTING AFFAIRS.

THE wars of the Assyrians consisted of annual campaigns into the territories of their neighbours. It was the habit of the king, early in the summer, to lead his army across his own border into the adjacent countries, and then to fight until the enemy was overpowered and forced to submit, or until he was himself defeated and obliged to retreat into his own land again. The monarch usually rode in his chariot, dressed in royal apparel, and wearing the tiara upon his head. An umbrella-bearer and a charioteer occupied the same war carriage. A quiver-bearer and a bow-bearer followed upon horseback ; also two or three men leading chargers, in order to furnish the royal warrior with a means of escape, if it so happened that the battle went against him. The army in part preceded the *cortège* of the king, in part followed a little behind, and was divided into several corps, consisting of cavalry, infantry, archers, and pioneers. All personages in command used chariots. These vehicles were probably made of wood. They were drawn by two or three horses, one horse in the latter case being attached by a rope or thong (like the side horses of the Greeks), and regarded as a supernumerary to take the



place of one of the others if an accident occurred. The reins of the horses were fastened to either end of a bit resembling our modern snaffle, and each rein was separate, all the reins on the right side being grasped in one hand of the driver, all those on the left side being held by him in his other.

The seat of the cavalry soldier at an early period was very extraordinary. He rode upon the bare back of his horse, and instead of allowing his legs to hang naturally down the sides of his steed, he drew them up to a level with his charger's back, and held on by pressing the base of the horse's neck between his knees. At a later period the riders made use of saddles, and their seat became more natural and graceful.

The dress of the warriors consisted of a tunic, a helmet, and sometimes armour of mail; and upon their feet they wore sandals. Their shields were either large ones made of wicker-work, or small round metal shields, of iron, bronze, silver, or even plaited gold. Their standard was a pole, fixed at the end of a chariot; it had at the top a circular frame containing an artistic representation of a god, or a sacred symbol. Sometimes, on entering the enemy's country, a river had to be crossed. Then the horses were fastened by ropes to poles near the sterns of the boats, and were made to swim over; and the soldiers forded the stream sitting upon the inflated skins of animals; they held the necks of the floats in their hands, and increased the inflation by breathing into the orifices.

Only the king and his chief officers were allowed to use tents. The common soldiers slept upon the ground, or took shelter in the villages after conquering the foe. The tents were open to the sky in the centre, but closed in at either end by a semicircular top, and were probably made of felt. The camp was carefully watched, and a guard was kept round the tent of the king.

There is no evidence to show how the armies were drawn up, and the manner in which the engagements took place; and the sculptures representing battles and sieges show the soldiers confusedly mixed up together. This is accounted for by the inability of the Assyrian artists to represent troops in perspective, and also by their preference for portraying the defeat and pursuit of the enemy rather than the preparation for battle or the attack. No quarter was given after a victory, for the soldiers who carried back heads to the camp were rewarded; and therefore, so soon as an engagement was over, the whole army turned to beheading the prisoners, and showed no pity either to the wounded or to the defenceless.

When the enemy could no longer resist in the open field, he usually took refuge in his fortified cities, of which the defences appear to have been high battlemented walls, flanked with towers, pierced with apertures for the archers, and guarded by gateways with heavy doors. The Assyrians had three modes of attack. Sometimes they placed long ladders against the walls of a fortress, and sent spearmen and archers up the rungs.

If this failed they tried the effect of battering-rams, which had heads shaped like spears or funnels. As a final resort, they undermined the foundations of the walls with pickaxes and crowbars, and thus forced an entrance into the citadel. The besieged, on their part, endeavoured to dislodge the ladders; and, if unable to do this, hurled huge stones down upon their assailants. They used fire as a weapon to turn away the battering-rams, throwing burning torches upon the osier instru-



SIEGE OF A CITY.

ments. Against the miners they could do little, for soon they felt the walls totter, and knew that their last hour had come. When the enemy rushed in the work of destruction commenced. The battlements were broken down, and the walls were levelled to the earth. The trees were destroyed, and carried off as timber to Assyria. The whole place was plundered and burnt. The temples were entered, and the images of the gods were seized and borne to Assyrian shrines. The inhabitants were

made prisoners, and were brought into the presence of the king with their hands manacled either before them or behind their backs, and sometimes with fetters attached to their feet, and even with rings passed through their lips. The monarch sat upon his throne, surrounded by his attendants, and received the captives one by one in order to pronounce their doom. Upon some he proudly placed his foot, others he gave into the hands of the executioner, many he sentenced to be carried into slavery, and a few he pardoned. The women and children were treated with more compassion than the men, and, if made slaves, were generally carried to their new homes in carts or upon mules, and were seldom forced to travel upon foot; moreover, the female captives were allowed to take with them their children and household goods and chattels, and thus the sculptures seldom represent them as exhibiting signs of sorrow.

The favourite occupation of the king in time of peace was the chase. In early days the monarch went out hunting in his chariot, dressed as when on a military campaign, and accompanied by his charioteer, some swordsmen, and a groom holding a led horse. If a lion was found the king pursued it in his chariot. He let his arrows fly as he went, and sought to pierce the animal about the head and breast, defending himself with a spear or shield if the infuriated beast turned upon him. In later times the king enjoyed the sport on foot, and carried a short sword, which he strove to plunge into the lion's heart. Or, with a small band of attendants he

took ship, and while beaters on either side of the river started the prey, he allowed himself to be rowed quietly down the stream until a lion plunged into the water. Then he took aim at the beast with an arrow, while his followers defended his person from injury.

Lions became scarce toward the close of Assyrian history. They were then brought in cages to the royal hunting-ground, and turned loose, to afford sport for the king. The sovereign is represented by the sculptures slaying large numbers of them, and strewing the ground with their dead bodies.

The wild bull was also hunted. The reliefs show bulls rushing at the king's chariot, and being seized by the horns and thus slain.

The chase of the wild ass, the stag, the ibex, the gazelle, and the hare were not usually thought worthy of the king's attention, but his household enjoyed the pursuit while their sovereign looked on with interest and amusement. These animals were hunted with dogs; large and powerful hounds of a type approaching that of our modern mastiff, very broad across the chest, strong limbed, and with a somewhat heavy neck and head.

The dress of the king when out hunting, or in the battle-field, was an under robe confined at the waist by a girdle, an apron ornamented with tassels and fringe, a narrow belt to hold daggers, and sandals. In time of peace he wore a long flowing robe, a broad belt round his waist, a mantle hanging from his shoulders, and a fillet, tiara, or mitre upon his head. His jewellery was

of many kinds, but the only ornament especially worthy of notice was the royal collar, from which a number of sacred emblems were suspended, namely, the crescent of the new moon, the emblem of the moon-god Sin; the four-rayed orb, the emblem of the Sun-god Shamas; the horned cap, the emblem of the king's guardian genius; and the triple bolt, the emblem of Rimmon, the god of the sky.

The officers of the royal household were many in number, and among them the Rabshakeh, or prime-minister, held the chief place.

The court ceremonial was stately and imposing. Its principal feature was its military air. The king superintended all things in person, showed himself freely to his subjects, rode in an open chariot, and walked about on foot among his people. Nevertheless, the Assyrian monarchs were exceedingly haughty and proud, and allowed no sort of familiarity. They carried their thrones with them wherever they went; and are always represented in the reliefs surrounded by state officers, and keeping up the court ceremonial alike at home and in the battle-field.



## CHAPTER VIII.

## ASSYRIAN DOMESTIC AFFAIRS.

THE little we know of Assyrian domestic matters is chiefly drawn from the time of Assur-bani-pal, about the year 650 B.C.

The dress of the common people at this period is represented by the sculptures as being a plain tunic with short sleeves, which reached to the knees, and was tied round the waist with a girdle. No head-dress was worn, but the hair fell in large waves from the forehead to the back of the neck, and was considered to afford sufficient protection from both sun and rain.

Men of rank wore long robes, fringed and ornamented round the neck and arms. Also head-dresses shaped like cones. Women of rank were dressed in tunics and cloaks, and wore fillets upon their heads.

A few toilet articles, such as combs and mirrors, have been discovered. Some of these may be seen in the British Museum.

The usual food of the poor consisted of grain, such as wheat or barley, moistened with water, kneaded in a bowl, and then rolled into cakes. The soldiers appear to have eaten meat, for the sculptures show them engaged in killing and cooking oxen and sheep when out on

military campaigns; but the people at home were content with more simple fare.

The fruits of the country were grapes, citrons, pomegranates, and apparently pine-apples. These are seen in the reliefs in dishes which the attendants hold high above their heads, and thus bear to the banquets of the king.

The Assyrians drank abundantly at their feasts. They were served by attendants, who dipped the wine-cups into huge bowls which stood upon the ground, and then handed the wine to the guests. The visitors were divided into messes of four, and sat upon high stools, two and two, facing one another. Each mess had a separate table and servant. In one drinking scene found at Khorsábád, every guest is represented holding a wine-cup in his hand. The cups are of an elegant shape, the lower part of them being modelled in the form of a lion's head, from which the stem rises in a graceful curve. The guests hold the cups upon a level with their heads, and appear to be pledging one another or else one and all drinking the same toast.

Music usually accompanied the festivities. The Assyrians appear to have delighted in musical sounds. They had eight or nine different musical instruments, stringed, wind, and instruments of percussion. In the early sculptures we notice the harp, the lyre, and the cymbal. Later on the double-pipe, the guitar, the tambourine, and a kind of drum; also a horn (something like the military trumpet of the Greeks and Romans), which



is used by the overseers in directing the transport of colossal animals. We know very little of the character of the music, and cannot tell whether the musicians used instruments and voices in combination. In the single instance in which this is the case the singers are Susianians, and not Assyrians. The favourite instrument for the performance of religious music was the harp, and for festivals the lyre. Bands accompanied processions and pageants, and preceded the king on his triumphal return from the field of battle.

Like the Egyptians, Greeks, and Romans, the Assyrians introduced flowers into their feasts, and the attendants are seen in the reliefs bearing jars filled with flowers to the king's table.

The exports of the Assyrians appear to have been silk, wool, and cotton. Our only certain knowledge concerning them is derived from the notice of the Prophet Ezekiel, which tells us that the Assyrian merchants traded with Tyre "in blue clothes, and brodered work, and in chests of rich apparel" (Ezekiel xxvii. 23, 24); the notice of Herodotus, that Assyrian wares had in ancient times been conveyed by the Phœnicians to Greece and sold to the inhabitants; and the notice of Pliny, that the principal Assyrian export was silk.

The imports seem to have been ivory, gems, cedar, and pearls. All other imports are merely conjectural.

Some of the native houses had gardens surrounding them, and these show the taste of the Assyrians in horticultural matters to have resembled that of the

modern Dutch. The trees are all of similar character, and are arranged in rows at equal distances; the paths are straight, and meet each other at right angles. Water was abundantly supplied by means of canals from neighbouring rivers, or was brought by aqueducts from a distance. Hanging gardens were made either by planting the banks of a stream with trees of different kinds, or else by planting flowers and shrubs upon the roofs of the buildings. These gardens were known in Assyria in the time of Sennacherib.

Although the country abounded in rivers, the art of fishing was carried on in a very rude way. The fisherman held a simple line in his hand, and used neither rod nor float. He generally stood by the brink of the river, but sometimes he seated himself upon the inflated skin of an animal, and floated down the stream, holding the orifice of the skin in one hand, and the fishing-rod in the other. According to the reliefs, the earliest species of boats used were inflated skins; these were followed by rafts, then by boats shaped like Welsh coracles, and finally by river-galleys. In galleys the naval architecture of the Assyrians appears to have culminated, for sails and masts are never seen in the reliefs.

These few details are almost all that we know concerning the private life of the Assyrians. The literature of the nation ignores household matters, and concerns itself with greater things. The sculptures also rarely portray domestic scenes.

This does not surprise us, when we consider the

character of the people, and study their faces as shown by the reliefs. The effigies bear a striking resemblance to the Hebrew physiognomy of the present time. The straight but rather low forehead, the full brow, the large almond-shaped eye, the aquiline nose, the strong firm mouth, the rather thick lips, the powerful chin, the abundant curly hair and beard, all these recall the chief peculiarities of the Hebrew of to-day. The traits are for the most part common to the whole Semitic race, and are seen now alike in the Arab, the Hebrew, and the Chaldean, while anciently they characterized not only the Assyrians, but also the Phœnicians, Arabs, Syrians, and Hebrews. In form the Assyrians were more robust, broad-shouldered, and large-limbed than the present Oriental Hebrews, but resembled in make the modern Chaldeans. Their limbs, as represented by the reliefs, are too large for beauty, but indicate enormous physical power, and show the strength and force which rendered them so efficient in the field of battle.

The peculiar characteristics of the Assyrians were strength and bravery, also treachery, cruelty (the sculptures show the cruelty of the people in a terrible manner, and portray scenes of torture too painful to dwell upon), and pride. The Hebrew documents endorse this estimate of the Assyrian character, for they speak of the people as "a fierce people" (Is. xxxiii. 19), and describe the nation as "a mighty and strong one, which as a tempest of hail and a destroying storm, as a flood of mighty waters overflowing, shall cast down to the earth

with the hand" (Is. xxviii. 2), and call Nineveh "a bloody city" (Nahum iii. 1). Speaking of Assyrian treachery, the Hebrew prophet says, "Woe to thee that spoilest, and thou wast not spoiled; and dealest treacherously, and they dealt not treacherously with thee" (Is. xxxiii. 1); and in the same spirit another prophet declares that Nineveh is "all full of lies and robbery" (Nahum iii. 1). The arrogance of the Assyrians draws forth the sternest denunciations of the Hebrew prophets, and Isaiah, Ezekiel, and Zephaniah alike dwell upon this feature of their character, and call down Divine judgments to humble their pride. In the emblematic language of Hebrew prophecy, the *lion* is taken as the fittest symbol for Assyria, and the country is painted as "the lion that did tear in pieces enough for his whelps, and strangled for his lionesses, and filled his holes with prey, and his dens with ravin" (Nahum ii. 12).

The lion was also the favourite national emblem, and accepted by the people as their representative; and this is why the king of animals is so frequently portrayed on the Assyrian monuments, either in his natural form or with a human head.



## CHAPTER IX.

## COLOSSAL ANIMALS.

THE colossal creatures of mixed human and animal form which have been excavated in Assyria, stood originally in pairs at the doors of the outer halls and the great apartments of the temples and palaces. Their office was to guard the entrance, to overawe all who sought to come in without permission, and to exclude evil influences. They were considered guardian genii, and were thought to be alive, supernatural powers being supposed to reside in the stone effigies. They were no idle creations, or works of mere fancy, but embodiments of the Assyrian conceptions of supernatural powers, and intended to symbolize the union of all possible perfections in the nature of the gods. The Assyrians knew no better type of intellect and knowledge than the head of the man, of strength than the body of the lion or bull, of swiftness and motion than the wings of the eagle. Thus by these singular forms, partly human, partly animal, they tried to convey the idea of the union of the greatest intellectual and physical powers, or, as we should say, of omniscience, omnipotence, and omnipresence.

Probably the Assyrian symbolical figures were derived

from those of the Babylonians ; for, according to Berosus, there were in the temples of Belus representations of men with two wings, and others with four wings, and some having two faces ; also bulls with the heads of men, and horses with the heads of dogs. The Babylonians, it will be remembered, believed in animals endowed with reason, and thought that such creatures appeared from time to time in the world. Berosus tells us that in early days there came from the Erythraean Sea, which borders upon Babylonia, an animal endowed with reason and with a human voice. This being gave the Babylonians an insight into letters and sciences, and taught them arts of every kind, and to found temples, construct cities, and compile laws. Other such monsters appeared at different periods, and were called “annedoti.” These mythical Babylonian creatures were in all probability embodied in stone effigies, and afterwards improved upon by the Assyrians, and made to represent supernatural ideas. At any rate, we know that the colossal creatures held an important place in the thoughts of a people who lived some four thousand years ago ; and their remote antiquity strikes our minds with a feeling of awe. After being hidden from sight for twenty-five centuries, they have been brought once more before human eyes, and stand forth in their ancient majesty to bear testimony to Assyrian renown and power ; and to prove that although now “Nineveh is a desolation, and dry like a wilderness, and flocks lie down in the midst of her, and desolation is in her thresholds.” (Zephaniah ii.)

“The Assyrian was a cedar in Lebanon, with fair branches and with a shadowing shroud, and of a high stature ; and his top was among the thick boughs. All the fowls of heaven made their nests in his boughs, and under his shadow dwelt all great nations.” (Ezekiel xxxi.)







# BY-PATHS

OF

## BIBLE KNOWLEDGE.

---

UNDER this general title THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY purposes publishing a Series of Books on subjects of interest connected with the Bible, not adequately dealt with in the ordinary Handbooks.

The writers will, in all cases, be those who have special acquaintance with the subjects they take up, and who enjoy special facilities for acquiring the latest and most accurate information.

Each Volume will be complete in itself, and, if possible, the price will be kept uniformly at *half-a-crown*.

The Series is designed for general readers, who wish to get in a compact and interesting form the fresh knowledge that has been brought to light during the last few years in so many departments of Biblical study. Intelligent young readers of both sexes, Sunday-school teachers, and all Bible students will, it is hoped, find these Volumes both attractive and useful.

The order of publication will probably be as follows, the titles in some cases being provisional:

- I. **CLEOPATRA'S NEEDLE.** A History of the Obelisk on the Embankment, a Translation and Exposition of the Hieroglyphics, and a Sketch of the two kings, whose deeds it commemorates. By Rev. JAMES KING, M.A., Authorized Lecturer to the Palestine Exploration Fund.  
(Now ready.)

- II. **ASSYRIAN LIFE AND HISTORY.** By M. E. HARKNESS, with an Introduction by REGINALD STUART POOLE, of the British Museum. (*In October.*)
- 

- III. **A SKETCH** of the most striking Confirmations of the Bible, shown in the recent Discoveries and Translations of Monuments in Egypt, Babylonia, Assyria, etc. By the Rev. A. H. SAYCE, M.A., Fellow of Queen's College, and Deputy Professor of Comparative Philology in the University of Oxford, Member of the Old Testament Revision Committee. (*In November or December.*)
- 

- IV. **BABYLONIAN LIFE AND HISTORY**, as Illustrated by the Monuments. By MR. BUDGE, of the British Museum.
- 

- V. **THE RECENT SURVEY OF PALESTINE**, and the most striking Results of it.
- 

- VI. **EGYPT—HISTORY, ART, and CUSTOMS**, as Illustrated by the Monuments in the British Museum.
- 

- VII. **UNDERGROUND JERUSALEM.**
- 

*N.B.—Other Subjects are in course of preparation, and will be announced in due course.*

---

LONDON: THE RELIGIOUS TRACT SOCIETY,  
56, PATERNOSTER ROW.



